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Estranjero : (The stranger): a story of

EL ESTRANJERO

RUSSELL JUDSON WATERS

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EL ESTRANJERO

In the cañon's depths

EL ESTRANJERO

(THE STRANGER)

A STORY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

BY

RUSSELL JUDSON WATERS

AUTHOR OF

Lyric Echoes, Legend of Tauquito, Peter Dunderhead Papers, A Man for Breakfast, A Pioneer Woman, The Dude's Hunt

Illustrated by
WILL E. CHAPIN

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EL ESTRANJERO

TO THE

EARLY PIONEERS

Whose energy, thrift, perseverance, and belief in its glorious future made possible the wonderful development of this fair land of

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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PROLOGUE

The scenes portrayed and the actions reflected in the following pages are in most instances true to the life of early days, representing, as they do, many of the historical events which transpired in one of the most picturesque of the western settlements. This pueblo was situated at the foot of the San Bernardino Range of mountains in Imperial county, an empire in itself, one of the proudest counties in the Golden State.

While the sons and daughters of this great commonwealth were then deeply enamored with and proud of their beautiful land, they never in their wildest flights of imagination pictured the great advancement and growth since made in the southern part of this giant state.

From a few modest, vine-covered cottages and sun-dried adobes of the early sixties, widely scattered over the plains from the mountains to the ocean, at intervals so great that it might well bear the appellation of "the settlement of magnificent distances," the section, formerly known as the "cow counties" of California, has grown in population, wealth and importance, until it now maintains a position equal, if not superior, to any part of the state.

This may be said of nearly all of the country lying south of the Tehachipi. From mountains to ocean the growth and improvement has been phenomenal. All that could be desired and more than could have been

expected in a country known as semiarid—much of it down on the maps of our country as desert land—has been accomplished.

To the student and lover of nature, and to those of a romantic turn of mind, the earlier history of California appeals with overwhelming force, and dwarfs into insignificance any material improvement.

To those living in the valley, in sight of the mountains, with their ever-varying scenery of light and shade, forest and vale, sunshine and shadow, and their myriad attractions, there is an endless charm which is irresistible.

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of homely comfort and thrift about this place which indicated that the owner was a person of consequence in the community.

Upon a beautiful morning a man, coming from the direction of the mountains, and apparently in desperate straits, was making his way through the valley toward the settlement. He was hatless, coatless, and shoeless, and his appearance indicated that he had been engaged in a fierce hand to hand encounter. Ragged, unkempt and dirty, he looked as though weeks or months might have passed since he had known comfort or shelter. His eyes were wide and unseeing like those of a somnambulist, and he groped with his hands as he staggered along, turning occasionally and attempting feebly to run back, then again setting his face toward the pueblo and tottering forward.

His every movement showed physical weakness and mental confusion, and yet there seemed to be a purpose holding him that impelled him onward. Struggling, falling, and rising many times, until it seemed that he must surrender and lie down to die, he at length fell and lay so still that the ever watchful buzzards, circling nearer and nearer, came so close to him that the wing of the most venturesome brushed his cheek. Involuntarily his hand was raised to protect his face, and falling back, splashed in a little runlet.

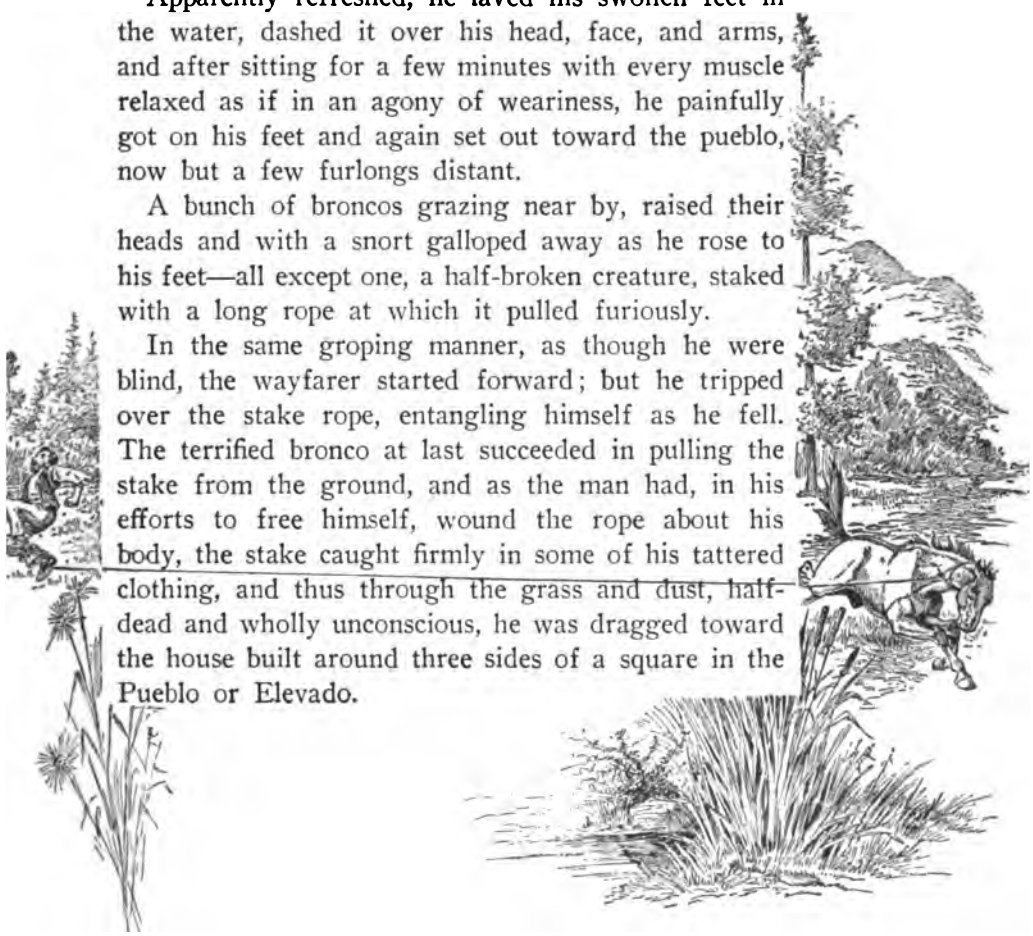
The touch of the water revived him and like a vounded snake he dragged himself half a length,

dropped his head to the cool surface of the stream, and drank long and deeply.

Apparently refreshed, he laved his swollen feet in the water, dashed it over his head, face, and arms, and after sitting for a few minutes with every muscle relaxed as if in an agony of weariness, he painfully got on his feet and again set out toward the pueblo, now but a few furlongs distant.

A bunch of broncos grazing near by, raised their heads and with a snort galloped away as he rose to his feet—all except one, a half-broken creature, staked with a long rope at which it pulled furiously.

In the same groping manner, as though he were blind, the wayfarer started forward; but he tripped over the stake rope, entangling himself as he fell. The terrified bronco at last succeeded in pulling the stake from the ground, and as the man had, in his efforts to free himself, wound the rope about his body, the stake caught firmly in some of his tattered clothing, and thus through the grass and dust, half-dead and wholly unconscious, he was dragged toward the house built around three sides of a square in the Pueblo or Elevado.



CHAPTER II

THE RESCUE

On the wide western veranda of the Holcomb ranch house a boy and girl were swinging in a hammock, their feet outstretched so that they struck against the veranda railing with every forward swing, giving the impetus for the delightful motion. The girl might have been eleven or twelve, and the boy was about the same age. She was fair-haired and blue-eyed, with the ungainly length of arm and leg characteristic of that period of childhood, but giving promise of future bloom and beauty. The boy was dark-haired and brown-eyed, but his naturally dark complexion was yet fairer than that of his cousin, who was freckled by the wind and sun, while the absence of tan on his own skin showed him new to the ardor of the California climate.

In the patio an Indian lad, dressed in faded blue overalls and red cotton shirt, was squatting upon his bare brown heels, plaiting a horse hair riata, while his mother, the stolid-faced Francesca, was busied about a fire, over which hung a kettle of boiling water suspended from a pole resting in the crotches of two strong oak branches set in the ground. The corn husks upon a low bench indicated that she had finished the making of the tamales, the last of which she now dropped into the kettle, and stood with arms

akimbo, watching a distant cloud of dust that might indicate an approaching horseman.

"Alice," the boy was saying, "Auntie said last night that there ain't no school at all here that's fit for a big girl like you. Gimini! Alice, I wished I lived here all the time, 'cause if there ain't no school fit to go to I'd stay at home, and me and Juan would fish all day, an' hunt and have lots of fun, wouldn't we, Juan?" The Indian lad looked up with an assenting nod and a grin that showed his white teeth.

"And, Alice," the boy went on, "Auntie said that when Papa goes back she's goin' to send you with us to go to school till you're all growed up, now what do you think of that?"

Alice's blue eyes widened as she stared at the speaker. "Phil," she said, "I think you are one great big story teller."

"No, honest, Alice, cross my heart," said the child, suiting the action to the word, and thus giving the inviolable sign of childhood that he told the truth. "Cross my heart," he said again, "Auntie did say it."

"I won't go," Alice said, setting her red lips together firmly. "I won't go back East where there ain't no Juan and Francesca and no Daddy to let me ride my pony after the cattle. I'm going to stay here and be a cow-puncher-girl when I grow up. I hate school and I'll run away if Uncle takes me back East. What's that, Francesca," she cried, jumping from the hammock so suddenly that she turned it wrong side out and Phil tumbled to the floor.

"That" was a galloping horse dragging a rope, at the end of which was a ragged and tattered bundle.

"Daddy! Daddy," she cried, "Daddy!"

A tall, bearded man with his sleeves rolled above his elbows appeared in the doorway. One glance and he was down the steps, jerking a riata from a nail and coiling it as he ran.

"Juan," he cried, "head him!"

The lithe Indian lad sprang forward waving his arms, the horse swerved, and in an instant the lariat fell about his neck, was snubbed neatly around the post of the veranda by the man, and the animal stood trembling and snorting, the bundle but a few feet distant from his plunging hoofs.

A stroke of a knife severed the stake rope, and Francesca and Juan, aided by Holcomb, laid the poor broken form upon the floor of the veranda.

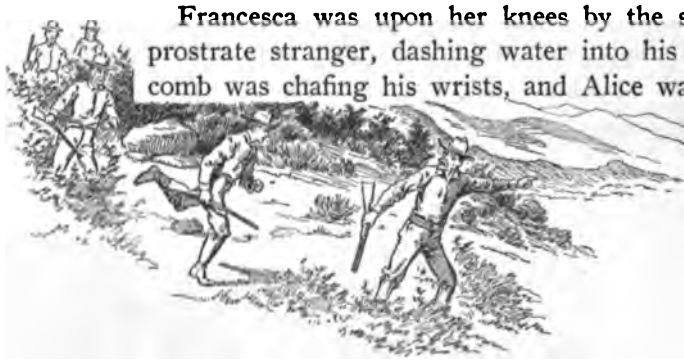
"Where's your father, Phil?" Holcomb asked the boy.

"He's out in the orchard with Auntie, I'll get him," and the child raced away calling for his father at the top of his voice.

In a few minutes Mrs. Holcomb and her brother appeared, running, for the boy had told them that a man was dead on the veranda.

Phil's father was a physician, taking a vacation rest with his boy in his sister's California home.

Francesca was upon her knees by the side of the prostrate stranger, dashing water into his face, Holcomb was chafing his wrists, and Alice was standing



white-faced and wide-eyed gazing down upon him.

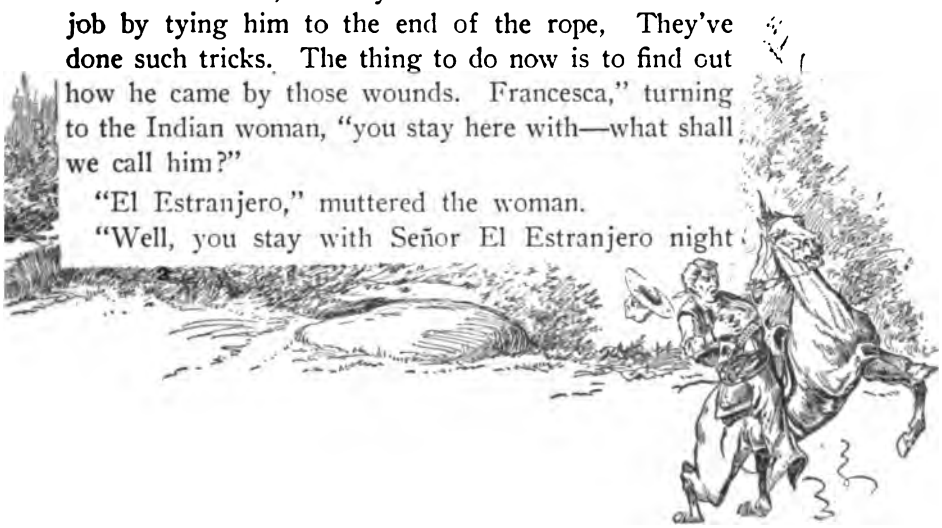
"Send the children away," was Dr. Adams' quick command, "and you, Marian," to his sister, "get my case from my bedroom."

With skillful hands he cut away the clothing from the bruised body and, to the horrified eyes of the little group, it was seen that they were black with the clotted blood of old wounds. The bruises from the providential accident that had thrown the stranger at their feet, were not serious in their nature, but the long festering cuts upon his back and shoulders, the marks of a bullet that had grazed the scalp, the rudely bandaged bullet wound in the fleshy part of the upper arm, all told a story of a fierce encounter.

"Indians," said Holcomb, as he stood looking down upon the unconscious stranger, who had been laid upon a bed in one of the rooms opening off the patio. "Looks like the work of 'paches, and may have happened a hundred miles away or twenty miles, most likely a hundred. How in thunder he got himself at the end of Pete's stake rope is what bothers me. If I did not know that Pete was staked less than half a mile from home, I'd say the Indians finished their job by tying him to the end of the rope, They've done such tricks. The thing to do now is to find out how he came by those wounds. Francesca," turning to the Indian woman, "you stay here with—what shall we call him?"

"El Estranjero," muttered the woman.

"Well, you stay with Señor El Estranjero night



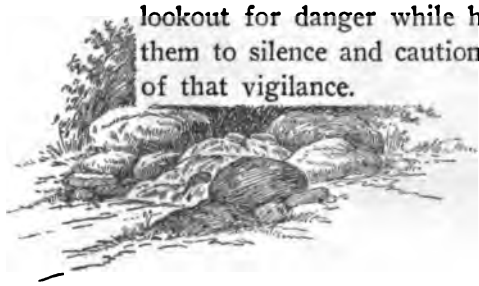
and day. Don't say a word to anybody about him, or how he came here. Do what the doctor tells you and, above all, listen and remember every word he says, if ever he gets so he can say anything.

"Marian," he said to his wife, "keep this matter quiet. There's no use raising a hue and cry needlessly. If there are Indians about, a still hunt will be sure to locate them and we will stand a better chance of finding the devils and punishing them than we would to raise a general alarm.

"I'll take Marco and Manuel and Juan, and if we find anything it will be time enough to raise a rumpus. There is no use in needlessly scaring the women and children with a false Indian alarm.

"Go call Marco and Manuel," he continued, turning to Juan, "and be back here in an hour. Tell them nothing but that I wish them to come with their guns and canteens and jerky enough for two weeks for the four of us."

He cautioned the children to absolute secrecy about the affair, and in an hour's time Holcomb was ready to set forth. He gave instructions to his ranch foreman and his herders to keep a wide and constant lookout for danger while he was absent, but pledged them to silence and caution with regard to the object of that vigilance.



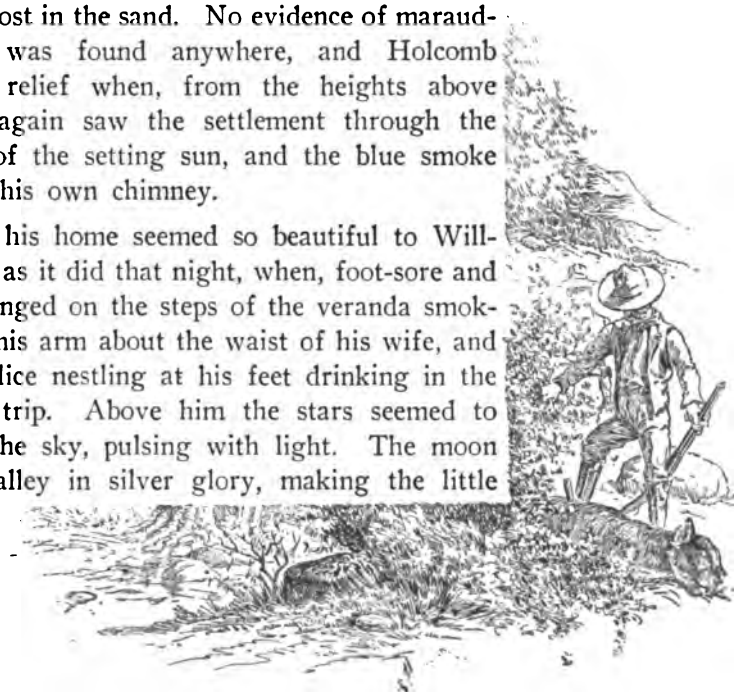
"The scouts followed this devious trail."—Page 16

rocks showed the dark stains of blood drops. Following this blood trail into the brush, the Indians found the carcass of a dead mountain lion, with the blade of a hunter's knife broken at the hilt within the skeleton.

This accounted for the long scratches on the back and shoulders of the stranger, but how he came by his other wounds was still as mysterious as ever. The lion of California will not attack man except on the strongest provocation; and, as the dead animal was a lioness, it was evident that the wayfarer must have come unexpectedly upon her and her cubs, and that his successful battle for life must have been terrific.

Without further discoveries, the trail was followed across the Antelope Valley to the edge of the desert where it was lost in the sand. No evidence of marauding savages was found anywhere, and Holcomb felt a great relief when, from the heights above Elevado, he again saw the settlement through the golden haze of the setting sun, and the blue smoke curling from his own chimney.

Never had his home seemed so beautiful to William Holcomb as it did that night, when, foot-sore and weary, he lounged on the steps of the veranda smoking his pipe, his arm about the waist of his wife, and Philip and Alice nestling at his feet drinking in the story of his trip. Above him the stars seemed to swing from the sky, pulsing with light. The moon bathed the valley in silver glory, making the little

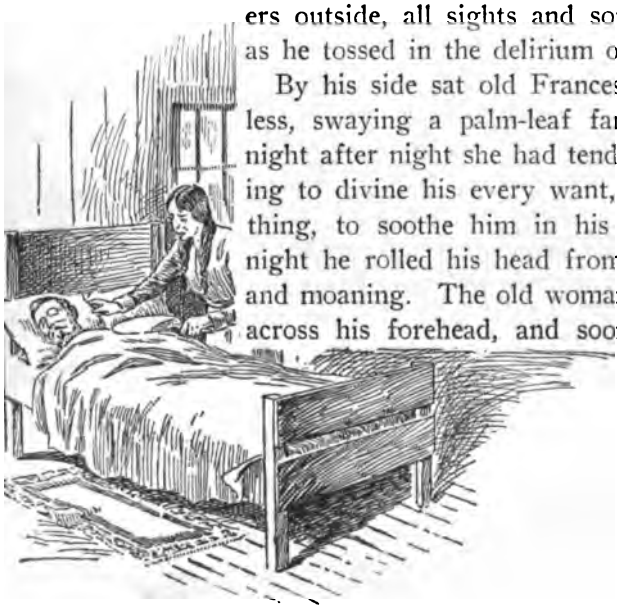


river look like a bright ribbon tying the mountains to the distant ocean.

The sombre heights stood out boldly against the moonlit sky, and a restless mocking bird trilled in the climbing rosebush in the patio. Whoever has heard the California mocking bird at nighttime singing his song full-throated, liquid and lovely, a riot of esctatic melody, has heard him at his best, and then, if the moon shone, and love and peace spread wide their brooding wings, the listener, as did Merlin of old, built airy palaces and cities from the unsubstantial fabric of a dream.

The children were full of eager questions and Dr. Adams was silent and thoughtful, as the narrative proceeded.

Within the house there was but a single light, a candle shaded so that its rays might not disturb the sick man who lay upon the bed between the open door and window. The fragrant breeze from the patio, the trill of the mocking bird, the low voices of the speakers outside, all sights and sounds were alike to him as he tossed in the delirium of fever.



By his side sat old Francesca, stolid and emotionless, swaying a palm-leaf fan. Day after day and night after night she had tended El Estranjero, seeming to divine his every want, to do always the right thing, to soothe him in his wildest delirium. Tonight he rolled his head from side to side muttering and moaning. The old woman softly laid a wet cloth across his forehead, and soon the muttering ceased

and the patient dropped into a deep sleep. The palm-leaf fan swayed back and forth, back and forth, the eyes of the old woman in eager scrutiny upon the sleeper's face.

Sitting thus she listened to the song of the mocking bird, but soon her face and figure became rigid. For many minutes she sat, stiff and staring, then a great trembling seized upon her, and crouching upon the floor at the foot of the bed, she sent out a wild and piercing "Ah—he! Ah—he! Ah—he!" the wail of the Indian in great sorrow.

The group upon the porch heard it.

"Can he be dead?" Holcomb cried.

"Impossible," said the doctor, "he has been improving slowing for days and was doing well when I left him but a short time ago."

Still the wail of the woman pierced the night, and the group on the porch rushed into the sick room.

The patient, who was sitting up in bed staring about him, dropped back on his pillow as they entered. His gaze was conscious, for the first time in the fortnight since he had been sheltered by that friendly roof.

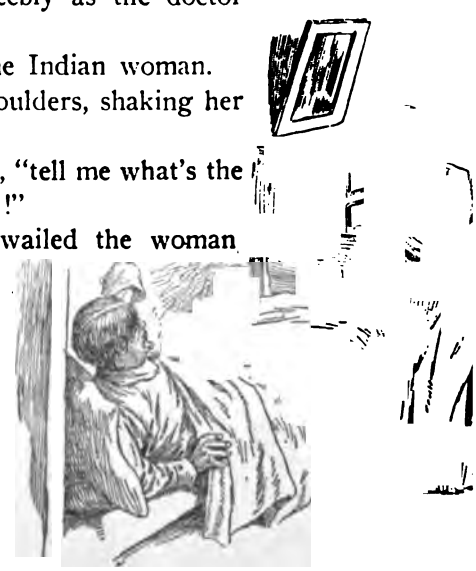
"What is it?" he whispered feebly as the doctor bent over him.

"Ah—he! Ah—he!" crooned the Indian woman.

Holcomb grasped her by the shoulders, shaking her as one shakes a sleeper.

"Francesca, Francesca," he cried, "tell me what's the matter! Stop it, stop it, I tell you!"

"The children, the children," wailed the woman



"Oh, mother of God, Señor, the poor little children!"

"The children are there," said Holcomb, pointing to the door where Alice and Philip were staring in wonder at this strange scene.

"Non, Non," cried the Indian, "the children with the wagons."

"Get up, Francesca," commanded her master. She arose and stood quietly before him, the tears streaking her dark face. "You are hysterical and worn out from watching, you must go now and send Manuel's wife. She will take care of the sick one."

At these words Francesca suddenly resumed her usual stolidity. "I alone know the wants of Señor El Estranjero," she said sullenly. "Vera is a young fool, she would give him the drink when the Señor doctor has desired the powder for him, and she would sleep when she should watch."

The doctor now turned and placed his fingers upon the wrist of the old woman.

"Pulse as steady as a clock, no hysteria here. What was the matter, Francesca?"

The old woman picked up the fan and began swaying it slowly back and forth but made no reply, and to all their questions presented such an imperturbable front that they finally desisted.

El Estranjero watched what was taking place as though it was part of the dream which had seemed so long to hold him.

Finally as the doctor bent over him to adjust his pillow, he said, "Where am I, who are they, how did I get here?"

"You have been ill," the doctor replied, "and you are among friends, so do not talk now. Here, drink this," and he held a glass to his lips. "In the morning we will have some explanations."

When the morning came, however, El Estranjero was again delirious, and for days remained unconscious. Then he became rational for a few minutes at a time. Finally the rational periods became longer, and in a little more than a week he slept quietly for hours at a time with no trace of delirium. At last the fever disappeared completely, and, weak and spent, but conscious, El Estranjero looked out again upon life. But some subtle thread of his mind seemed ravelled and broken beyond repair. His own name and names of persons and memories of places he had known seemed entirely obliterated, and all the events of his past life were as much a sealed book to him as they were to the people who had given him shelter.

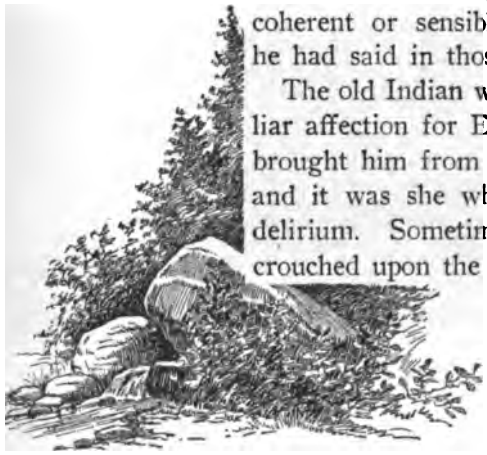
He could reason perfectly from cause to effect, could read and write, but he was as though he had been born into the world with these accomplishments. Singularly enough, he could compute mathematically, could remember the multiplication table, and could work out intricate geometrical problems. To Dr. Adams his case was one of the utmost interest, and Holcomb caused inquiry to be made in Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, and even in San Francisco, to try to discover his identity, but all in vain.

CHAPTER IV

A BETROTHAL

As the patient's strength grew, the doctor hoped his memory would strengthen, but his hope was vain. Certain mechanical actions, such as swimming, the loading and firing of a gun, harnessing and driving horses, he performed with great skill, but even his own name must, it seemed, remain forever unknown to him. In health El Estranjero was a handsome man, evidently two or three years under thirty, with curling brown hair and gray eyes. His features were finely formed, his mouth full and sensitive, and all his manners and language those of a man accustomed to cultivated surroundings.

To Alice and Philip the weeks of his convalescence were full of interest. They never tired of telling him the story of how black Pete had dragged him across the meadow, of the many times they had crouched by his bedside listening to his ravings, and how nothing coherent or sensible was ever made from anything he had said in those days of delirium.



The old Indian woman, Francesca, exhibited a peculiar affection for El Estranjero. It was she who had brought him from the jaws of death, she would say, and it was she who had seen his soul as he lay in delirium. Sometimes as she would speak of him she crouched upon the ground, as she had done the night

and that the child would be grateful later for what seemed a great cruelty now.

Alice saw there was no appeal from their decision, and, wildly weeping, she rushed from the house and away into the orchard, where she threw herself face downward on the ground under an orange tree to sob out her misery.

It was here that El Estranjero found her, and taking her in his arms, began to soothe and caress her.

Finally her tears ceased to flow. She wound her arms about his neck.

"I love you, Estranjero," she cried. "I love you next to Daddy better than anybody in the world. Stay here till I come back, and take care of black Pete and my pony, and I'll study hard and write you a letter every week. Say, El Estranjero, when I grow up I've got to marry—everybody does and I'm going to marry you. I can't marry Daddy, for he's married already, so I'm going to marry you. You'll wait till I'm grown up, won't you?"

"All right, little Alice," laughed Estranjero, "I'll wait, and I guess we might as well have an engagement ring." He pulled a horse-hair ring from his pocket. "See here, Alice, I made this from the hair of your pony's mane. I meant to give it to you anyway, so we'll make it an engagement ring."

"Well, you put it on," cried the little girl, "and now you must put your arm around me and press me to your breast and say, 'Darling, I will be true to my promise forevermore.' That's the way the man did

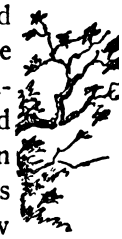
in the book Daddy read to mother one day when I was swinging in the hammock on the porch."

El Estranjero bent his laughing face to that of the little girl, drew her to his breast, and repeated the words she had dictated. Next day Alice Holcomb started for the East to "go to school till she was a grown lady." Years of study, travel in Europe, admiration by many a handsome swain were before her, and Señor El Estranjero soon forgot the scene in the orchard; but in a little orangewood box among her treasures, Alice Holcomb cherished a horsehair ring, and when she looked at it, as she sometimes did, she saw a house built around three sides of a square, set in a paradise of greenery, and an orange tree bending low over a barefoot, tear-stained little girl who lifted her lips to meet the laughing kiss of a man whose gray eyes and curling brown hair were touched with the light of deathless romance.

CHAPTER V

AFTER MANY YEARS

Twelve years have passed since Alice Holcomb bade good-bye to her California home. Her parents had planned that the girl should return each alternate summer, but in the spring of the second year her mother died, and her father thought it best his child should remain among her eastern kindred. Every year he made a pilgrimage of a few weeks to visit his daughter in the old Massachusetts home where he courted and married his wife. At first her pleadings to return with him were most piteous, but with the fickleness of children she soon became attached to her new friends, and even after her school days were over, prolonged her absence, and now, after three years in Europe, she was to come back to the house where she was born.



In those years the pueblo of Elevado had grown in size and importance. The houses had increased in number, and the green of the orange groves was stretching down into the valley and threatening to obliterate the cattle ranges. Irrigation ditches were beginning to scar the surface of the plain, and the premonition of that progress which afterward converted this region into the fairest orchard land on the earth was already felt.

The wooden house built round three sides of a square was a little more weather-beaten where its boards peeped through the embowering greenery, but was otherwise unchanged. Juan still braided his horsehair riatas, squatting against the shady side of the patio. Francesca still made her inimitable tamales. The master, too, was little changed. His hair was grizzled and his face saddened, but the vigor of his sturdy manhood was unabated.

It was Señor Estranjero that had changed the most. His figure had filled and straightened, his eyes had grown bright and his step elastic; but no recollection of his past life ever came back to him. Memory and regret are the sculptors that chisel lines upon cheek and brow and sprinkle the hair with gray. With memories dating only from his recovery from his wounds, Estranjero was like a man born full-grown into the world. With no brooding thoughts to haunt him, and with no regrets over lost opportunities and youthful follies, his life in this ideal pueblo was full of pleasing novelty, and if a shade of melancholy sometimes visited him, as he remembered no childhood or youthful friend or association, he felt none of the pangs of their absence.

He was certainly somewhere in the neighborhood of forty years of age, but he looked fully ten years younger, and was a favorite with high and low. As the Holcomb ranch was the only home of which he had conscious knowledge, he stayed on, a welcome friend and companion to its master.

Francesca's curious devotion to him continued unabated. She would sit for hours at his feet when her work was done, either with idle hands or plaiting willows for her baskets. She seemed to be able to sense his approach from a distance and predict it to the hour when he was absent on a hunt or rodeo, and once, when she was absent at a tribal fandango and he sustained a slight accident, she walked twenty miles and appeared in the middle of the night at his chamber door with "Señor Estranjero call, I come."

It was evening, and El Estranjero and the master of the house sat smoking upon the veranda. Holcomb held in his hand a letter which he had just been reading to his friend. It was from Alice, the last she would write before setting her face homeward, and naturally the two men were chatting of her.

"You'll be surprised when you see her. How do you remember her?"

"I think of her as a freckle-faced, long-limbed youngster in a blue calico dress," smiled Estranjero, "but she must be a grown woman now."

"She was four and twenty last May," responded her father, "and pretty well grown, too, I tell you."

There was silence, broken after a moment by the sudden appearance of Juan from around the corner of the house.

"Señor Holcomb," he said, standing before his master, "the lions kill the sheep. Every night it is to some corral they go. Estiballo have lost half a hundred, Kendalls six, ten," holding up his fingers to

emphasize his words, "and last night, Señor, it is our corral. I lay among the sheep and watched. It was bright as day, much moon shining. I slept not the whole night, but before my very eyes, Señor, two sheep were carried away and three left dead in the corral, though, Señor, I, who watch like the fox, see not one hair of the devil of a lion. Madre de Dios! Señor, what is it to do?"

"What shall we do, Estranjero?" queried Holcomb. "If as good a hunter as Juan can't spot the beast, I'm afraid I won't succeed."

Estranjero cogitated a few minutes. "Ah, I have it," he said at last. "Go you, Juan, to Estidullo and to Kendall and all others in the pueblo who have sheep, and tell them to house them safely to-night, so that no lion can reach them. Then you and Manuel and Pedro all bring your guns, and Mr. Holcomb will meet you at the cabin a hundred yards below the big sycamore tree. Take with you all the hounds, and keep them safe and quiet in the house, until you hear my gun. Then loose the dogs and come with all speed to the sycamore tree, for I will stake a couple of lambs there, hide myself, and when the lion comes to get the lambs, which will bleat for their mothers, we will get him."

"Make haste, Juan," Mr. Holcomb ordered, "for we must all be there before the moon rises, and it is fully up by nine o'clock."

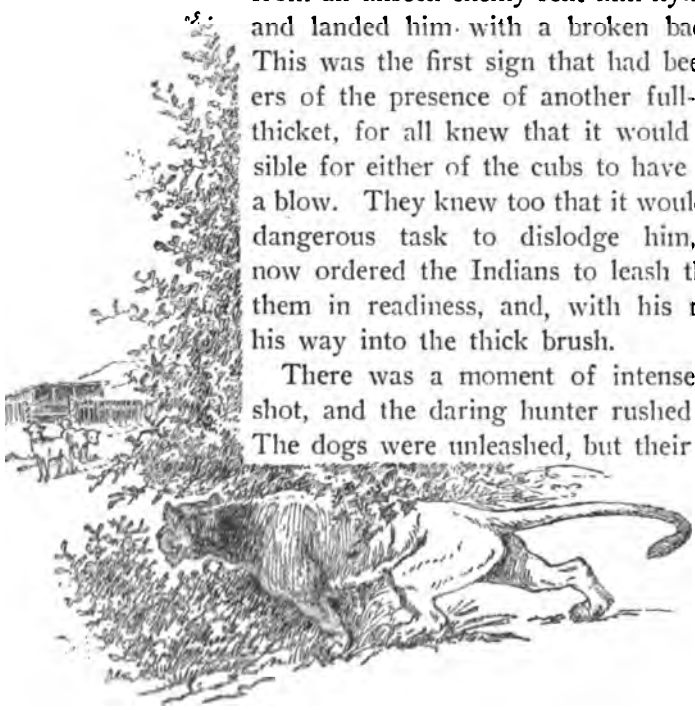
Juan was soon galloping bareback down the road to carry the warnings to the sheep owners of the

pueblo, and by moonrise all the preparations were completed and El Estranjero in hiding within rifle range of the bleating quarry.

It was nearly midnight when a crouching form glided from the underbrush and sneaked toward the lambs. Closely following were two half-grown cubs, imitating their dam's every movement. Estranjero waited until they were in the full moonlight, then taking careful aim he fired, and the lioness fell pierced to the heart.

The cubs made off into the thicket, but the men and dogs from the cabin had now reached the scene and formed a circle around the clump of bushes in which the cubs had taken shelter.

One of the oldest and most daring of the hounds ventured in to attack the cubs, but a powerful blow from an unseen enemy sent him flying through the air and landed him with a broken back at Juan's feet. This was the first sign that had been given the hunters of the presence of another full-grown lion in the thicket, for all knew that it would have been impossible for either of the cubs to have given so powerful a blow. They knew too that it would be a difficult and dangerous task to dislodge him, and Estranjero now ordered the Indians to leash the dogs, and hold them in readiness, and, with his rifle cocked, made his way into the thick brush.



There was a moment of intense suspense, then a shot, and the daring hunter rushed out of the brush. The dogs were unleashed, but their only labor was to

'There was a moment of intense suspense.''—Page 30

Her home-coming was near the end of the "dry season," that time in Southern California when the foothills and plains are clothed in every tender and beautiful tint of faded gold and dull green. It is that time when the sage gives out its most penetrating odor, when the wild anise flings forth its longest plumes, when the chaparral is most fragrant, when the light that is "always afternoon" seems to brood over every purple cañon, and the mountains stand out against the divine blue of the sky with only here and there a tiny snow cap upon the highest peaks.

In the East the autumn is a time of melancholy reflections. The falling leaves are like letters of the dead in which one reads of old delights and hours forever gone. The mist over the hills has a tinge of sadness. October in California holds not only the fruition of the year, but the promise of the future. The air is odorous wine; the light is a feast of glory, the days are like the heart of summer, but of summer with heat that warms and thrills, but never enervates. The nights are cool and starry, and sweet with health-giving slumber.

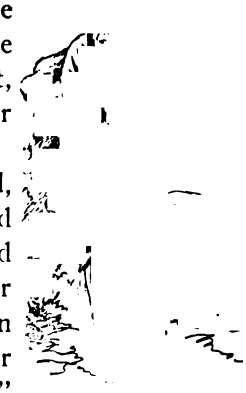
Alice's heart sang a song of joy, as by her father's side she rode through what seemed almost a land of enchantment. The pueblo of Los Angeles with its quaint narrow streets and adobe buildings, with here and there more pretentious structures, was unlike anything she had seen in her Old World wanderings.

They tarried there a few days, and then again took horse and rode through the lovely valley of the San

Gabriel, with its light-crowned rim of foothills, like wrinkled purple plush in a jewel box, and its fair rich plains, upon which thousands of cattle grazed on grass which in the lowlands and meadows is forever green. The ever-varying loveliness marked it as a Paradise where some day those fortunate souls should dwell who carf wed beauty to utility.

On through the fair Pomona Valley, through the "redlands," and at last Elevado with its vine-covered dwellings and its orchards came into view.

Juan had ridden with his master to attend the Señorita to her home; it was he who hobbled the horses by the stream when they halted for the night, who brought wood for their fire and water for their cooking.



Juan was surely the happiest Indian in all the land, for had not the Señorita remembered that he carried her on his back when she was a little child, and had not the Señorita brought him a magnificent silver watch, and so taught him to tell the time, that when he looked at the sun, he could say, "It is now an hour till midday," and then his watch would say "Si, si." And had not the Señorita given him a silver key for that watch, which put in a little hole in the back of it and twisted would make a most curious sound?

And the Señorita is taller, yes, much taller than when she went away, and her hair is like the corn silk and her eyes blue, and her skin, it is that milk-white and rosy, that the sun no more makes spots upon it, and the Señorita speaks like a great lady,

and her hands are white, and she walks straight as a pine tree. But ah, her smile. Well let Manuel await that smile, and even the picture of the Virgin in the Mission of the San Gabriel is not more heavenly sweet than the face of the Señorita when she smiles.

All this Juan related to Manuel when Alice and her father, arrived at last at their home, were ridding themselves of the stains of travel.

"Had hunted for three days."—Page 37

patio. Even old Francesca was not yet busied with the breakfast.

It was the girl's fancy to see her home alone in the early morning. The night before she had wandered through the house with her father, but both were tired, and he was sad; now she would see the haunts she had loved. There was the pepper tree where Daddy had made her a seat high up in the branches, yes, the seat was there yet, and there, too, were the strips of wood nailed upon its sloping trunk. She would climb up later with her book and sit on her old perch.

There was the rosebush, too; it now roofed the entire patio, and its lower stem was as thick as her slender waist. No such roses in Provence, she was sure, as those that grew here. There was the kettle, not the same, for kettles are not immortal, but looking the same, yes, the very kettle in which Francesca used to boil the tamales.

A couple of hounds rose from their rest upon the veranda, sniffed inquiringly about her, decided that she was to their liking, and followed as she wandered slowly toward the orchard. The sun was not yet risen, but a faint radiance touched the east. She would climb the meadow hill to watch the sunrise.

She made a fair picture as, lithe and straight, her smiling red lips half-parted over her white teeth, her cheeks faintly flushed with rose, her head uplifted as though she were about to break into a song of joy, she walked lightly on, followed by the two dogs.

It was here, yes, it was in this very spot, that she

last saw El Estranjero, under that tree by the cypress hedge; but how tall the hedge had grown, and a gate had been cut through it to the meadow.

At that instant the gate opened. The hounds made a joyful leap toward a man who came through it with a bridle over his arm. His sombrero shaded his face, but in an instant the hat was in his hand and he was bowing before her.

And was this El Estranjero, this man with the light of youth in his gray eyes, with the joy of youth in his pose, with his brown curls blowing about a forehead white and unmarked with wrinkles? The pictures her childish fancy had made of him were not so gallant as this. These thoughts went swiftly through her mind as she offered him her hand with a clear ringing laugh.

"Señor Estranjero, I am glad to see you, but you have spoiled my story that I am the only early riser on the Holcomb Ranch."

"Can this be Alice," Estranjero said. Then for the first time in many years he remembered the scene under the orange tree, the horsehair ring, the words the little tear-stained, freckled-faced girl had made him repeat and, looking into the eyes of the beautiful woman before him, a strange thrill went through him. He wondered if she had forgotten it, but of course she had, or else she could not look at him with so unembarrassed a gaze.

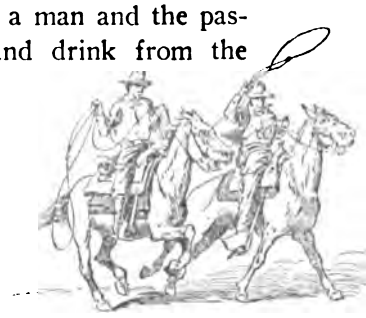
And Alice was saying to herself:

"He has forgotten it, and I am glad. I should die

of shame if he knew about the ring being kept all these years, but he is the Prince. I am glad that I know him now, at this first moment, as the one and only one that my heart acknowledges. Now I know why the men who have admired me and desired me have never touched a single chord of feeling. Now I know, but he must never know it, for he does not care."

She exchanged a few laughing words with him and passsed on into the meadow, and Estranjero from the safe shelter of the hedge, himself unseen, leaned against the tree that had witnessed his vow to a little child long ago, and watched the graceful woman pass; watched her climb the hill with the free grace of the trained walker; watched her stand with her face turned eastward like some fair prophetess, awaiting the coming of the god of day.

He was a mature man in brain and body, and he felt now the first thrill of love of which he had ever been conscious, and with it was no taint to mar the holiness of the feeling. It was the thrill of unsullied youth and innocence, in the presence of a sweet mystery. The love of childhood for its mate, of boyhood for the girlish ideal, these were unknown to Estranjero, for, if they had ever existed, they had been blotted out when memory of his name, place, station and experiences had been wiped off the tablet of his life, and with the power of a man and the passion of youth he could grasp and drink from the pure fountain of a first love.



He was not thinking these things. He was not thinking at all as he watched her pass. In soul he was with her, treading with her the brown field, standing with her fronting the east, and hand in hand was watching with her the sunrise of a new day.

CHAPTER VIII

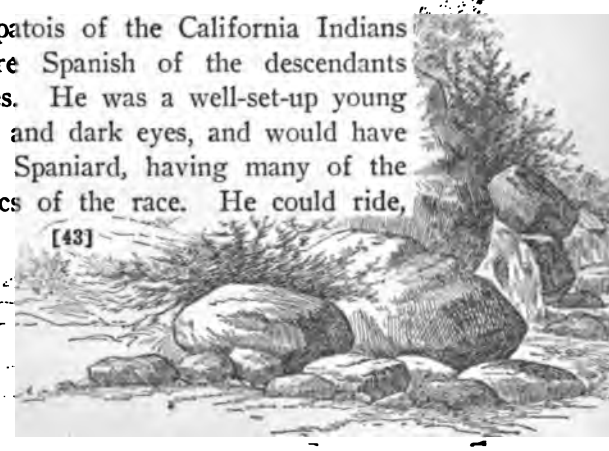
THE WARNING

When Alice Holcomb had started for her western home her cousin Philip had been her companion until they reached St. Louis. There he was compelled to remain a fortnight to transact some business for his father, and Alice, impatient of the delay, had traveled the remaining distance to San Pedro alone.

In a few days after her arrival, her father received a letter from the young man announcing his early coming, but as he proposed buying a horse at San Pedro to ride to Elevado, and as he was familiar with the way, having traveled it many times with his Uncle Holcomb, he would need no one from the ranch to guide him.

In the years Alice had been in school, Philip had spent most of his vacations upon his uncle's ranch, and now that he was out of college, his father was yielding to his earnest wish and was allowing him to come West to buy a ranch and grow up with the country.

Philip spoke the patois of the California Indians as well as the pure Spanish of the descendants of the Conquistadores. He was a well-set-up young man, with olive skin and dark eyes, and would have almost passed for a Spaniard, having many of the physical characteristics of the race. He could ride,



hunt, and swim, was well known to the people of the pueblo and knew them all, and Alice looked forward to his arrival with pleasure.

She had busied herself in those days with making herself acquainted with the routine of the household of which she henceforth was to be active mistress. Old Francesca had two years before been grumblingly compelled to allow Vera to share her labors in the kitchen, and now that the young Señorita had come Francesca felt her authority over the other servants to be vastly strengthened, and Alice humored her in this notion.

The days went by swiftly, full of pleasures and of duties. There were visits of the neighbors to be received and returned, long rides with her father when he went to attend to the cattle or upon some business of the ranch. But it was in the evening hours when the stars pulsed overhead and the fragrant wind blew softly from the mountains that the girl, sitting on the veranda with her father and El Estranjero while they smoked and chatted, felt herself most keenly alive and that a mysterious joy throbbed the universe of which she was a part.

El Estranjero seldom addressed her, but sat always where he could see the lovely profile, the slender hands folded loosely in her lap, the contour of her lithe body as she sat in her favorite place upon the steps of the patio with her head leaning against the rose-wreathed veranda pillar.

Alice also spoke little, but not a word that fell from

"A mysterious joy thrilled the universe." —Page 44

last she had come into her own and cherished this deep and silent passion with a solemn joy.

Upon the evening when Philip's arrival was being discussed by her father and Estranjero, she turned toward them suddenly.

"Father," she said, "when will you have the fall rodeo?"

"We will begin next week, little girl, and it will be great fun this year, and we'll have all the cattlemen from the Tehachipis to the Mexican line. Philip will be just in time for it, and you will see one of the sights of your life. It will not be many years before the cattle business in this region will be given up entirely, for land where oranges can be grown, as they can be here with proper irrigation, will soon be too valuable for cattle range."

"But, Daddy, you surely don't think we'll ever have here a thickly settled country like that east of the Mississippi River?"

"Alice, you'll live to see the pueblo of Los Angeles a city larger than St. Louis and every foot of the range orchards yellow with oranges. But we won't borrow trouble." He rose as he spoke and strolled out of the patio toward the corrals.

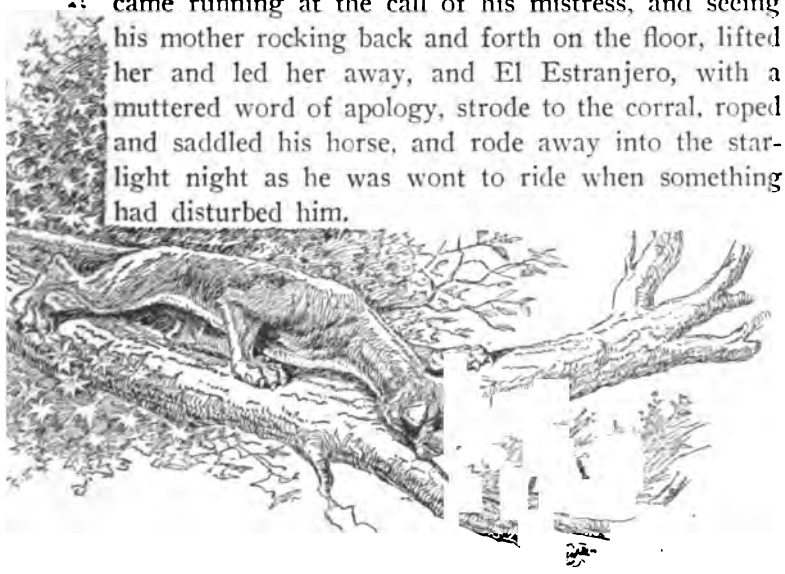
Estranjero sat very still watching the girl with her face toward the pure light of the stars. His eyes lingered upon the fair, sensitive features and a mist came before him. An instant and it passed and old Francesca was crouching at his feet, her hands clasping her knees, and rocking back and forth.

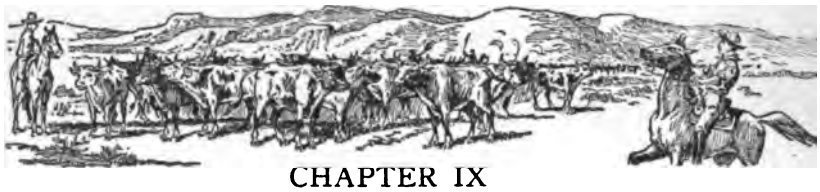
"Señor Estranjero, Non! Non!" she whispered, and again, "Non! Non!" in a very passion of negation.

His face grew white as he gazed at the old woman and something like fear seized him. What was the bond between him and this wrinkled, half-savage crone? Did she have that sense sometimes attributed to faithful dogs who are said to know their master's feelings, or was there knowledge of some sort behind the mystery of her actions?

As yet Alice had not noticed Francesca, for the shadows fell darkest where Estranjero sat; but now the old woman began to moan softly and to mutter, "Oh, the little child, Mother of God, the little child," and Alice turned toward her.

"Juan," she cried sharply, "Juan!" The Indian came running at the call of his mistress, and seeing his mother rocking back and forth on the floor, lifted her and led her away, and El Estranjero, with a muttered word of apology, strode to the corral, roped and saddled his horse, and rode away into the starlight night as he was wont to ride when something had disturbed him.



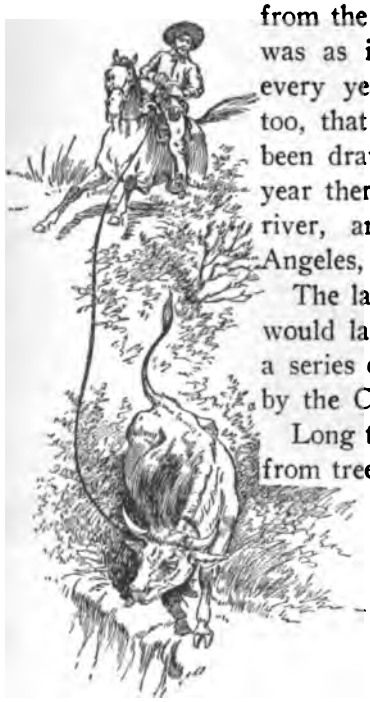


CHAPTER IX

THE RODEO

Elevado was all astir with preparations for the fall round-up. This year the branding corrals were being built in the meadows just outside the pueblo, and here the cattle from the thousands of acres of range would be herded, the beef steers cut out and segregated by their owners, and the cows and their calves corralled that the branding of the young might be properly done and the marking attended to.

There would be dozens of chuck-wagons and scores of cowboys, the most skillful in the land, and there would be the usual number of young men and women from the surrounding pueblos to whom a great rodeo was as interesting as though they had not seen it every year since their childhood. There would be, too, that sprinkling of "tenderfeet" that had always been drawn upon such occasions, but best of all this year there was to be a dancing pavilion down by the river, and the youth, even from far-away Los Angeles, would grace the occasion.



The labor and the attendant festivities of the rodeo would last a week, and to accommodate the visitors, a series of wickiups, or brush houses like those used by the California Indians, were built along the river. Long tables, too, were made of rough lumber nailed from tree to tree under the cottonwoods, trenches dug

"Now it would be a lank cowboy on his wiry little horse."—Page 49

Not seldom the pursued turned pursuer, and then it was a pretty race if some maddened old cow made after her tormentor. Such marvelous riding, such feats with the lariat, such quick work with the marking knife and branding iron! Surely there was virile manhood in this great Southwest that could face the constant danger of this life in the saddle, and Alice said many times to herself as she watched the scene, "It is my own land and they are my own people. This is not all they can do, and many of those men there are fit to be President of the United States or Minister to the Court of St. James. Best of all, they are men, and the West is in them, this wide, free, beautiful land."

Oftenest her eyes dwelt on a rider on a coal-black horse, whose skillful "throws," whose feats of horsemanship, whose grace and agility drew from even the taciturn cowboys many admiring comments.

"I tell you, Alice, Estranjero's a dandy," said Philip, as he sat on his horse beside her. "Look at him cutting out that steer. Did you ever see anything prettier? And look at him rope that calf! Not a Spanish vaquero of them all can handle a riata better than he does, and he's modest, too, no brag in him."

There was the usual racing, cock-fighting, ring-shooting, quoit-pitching, running, and wrestling, without which any such fiesta would have been incomplete, and surely no beef ever tasted so ambrosial as did

"*Cutting out with swift descending quirt.*"—Page 49

lavish hand and widespread generosity that all the girls claimed him, but none could lay a special claim, a state of affairs that made him as much a favorite with the swains as with the girls themselves, for there could be no jealousy of the dashing youth who smiled on all the ladies alike.

El Estranjero did not dance, but one night, when Alice sat upon a bench in the pavilion, he leaned over her as he stood outside and said softly, "If you will come with me, Miss Alice, I will show you one of the sights of the fiesta that you have not yet seen."

He led her out of the circle of light thrown by the candles fastened to the poles that upheld the pavilion roof, down the river, far beyond the barbecue tables, to a point where the stream curved sharply, shutting out the view of the wickiups, and before them, sheltered from view of the merrymakers by screening willows, was the camp of the California Indians.

Before a small fire that gave sufficient light for them to see one another, sat eight Indians, in two rows, facing one another. Surrounding them were interested spectators of a curious game which they were playing.

Four of the players held a blanket with their teeth in such a manner as to conceal their hands from their opponents. A sort of flexible bracelet, slipped from the wrist of one of the players, was passed from hand to hand. At the same time the players made every possible motion and contortion likely to mislead those of the opposite group as they took turns in

guessing who held the bracelet. The person designated as the supposed holder must fling up his hands the instant his name was called. Thereupon an umpire, sitting with a pile of sticks before him, would pass a stick to the successful guesser, to be redeemed later with money or valuables, as it was considered as a sort of note of hand.

Behind each row of players sat four squaws chanting a weird, savage song as encouragement to their own band of players.

"They are playing 'Peon.' They keep it up all night and for a week at a time," whispered El Estranjero to Alice, "and if they are not prevented, will gamble away their money, horses, clothes, blankets, and even pledge their squaws and children."

They watched the game for some time, and then softly left the spot.

"Shall I take you back to the dancers now?" asked Estranjero.

"No," replied Alice, "I think I will go home, I have danced enough for one week. To-morrow the fiesta will be over. The rodeo is practically ended, father says, and then the cattle will be gathered for the markets and cut from the herds, and the rest left on pasture. Come, let us walk home—the night is lovely, and the air delightfully cool."

So, under the light of the stars El Estranjero crossed the brown fields with Alice. Now and then, as they came to some rock or ditch, his hand touched hers as he helped her to cross it, and at every such

contact his pulses thrilled. Her dress was pale rose-color, and as the moon came up and its light fell upon her lithe figure as she walked with the free grace that was so characteristic of her, to El Estranjero she seemed a rose nodding upon a stem, a rose just opening, which he yearned to pluck and wear upon his heart forever.

Then the presumption of harboring such a thought came to him. She was young and he, well, he too was young. He smiled at the thought, for though he had undoubtedly lived much longer, she knew more years than did he. But she had traveled, had met handsome and distinguished men. Among them there might be one to whom the sweet rose's heart turned with all its fragrance.

They spoke of the game of "Peon," of the rodeo, the barbecue, the dance, but neither by word nor sign revealed the joy each felt in the presence of the other. No look or pressure of the hand as they went across that moonlit field betrayed that in their souls was "the light that shone o'er Eden."

At last they reached the steps to the veranda, and Alice sank down in her favorite place. The house was quiet. The Indian servants were still at the fiesta and Holcomb, too, was somewhere among the guests of the pueblo. Estranjero leaned against the opposite pillar and looked down upon Alice.

Suddenly from among the roses overhead a mocking bird began to trill. Alice rose from her seat and with parted lips stood listening to his song. It swelled

louder and more ecstatic. Estranjero advanced a step as though the music had woven a spell over him. Irresistibly Alice's glance sought his and standing thus they looked long and deeply into each other's eyes. Over and over the mocking bird trilled a soft, sweet call. "Alice," breathed Estranjero, "it is the call of my soul to you. Oh, my beloved, can you not reply?"

From out the shadow of the patio old Francesca flung herself between them. "Non," she cried, "Non, Señor Estranjero. Oh, my señorita, my little white dove! It grows dark, I cannot see. Ah—he! Ah—he! there is sorrow for you."

"Go," said Alice to Estranjero, who stared in horror at the old woman. "It is just one of her seizures. I will take her to her quarters. Go, for you seem to excite her!"

All the rest of that night Alice Holcomb knelt by her window, her heart filled with perplexity, and at dawn El Estranjero came back from a ride that left his horse fagged for many days.

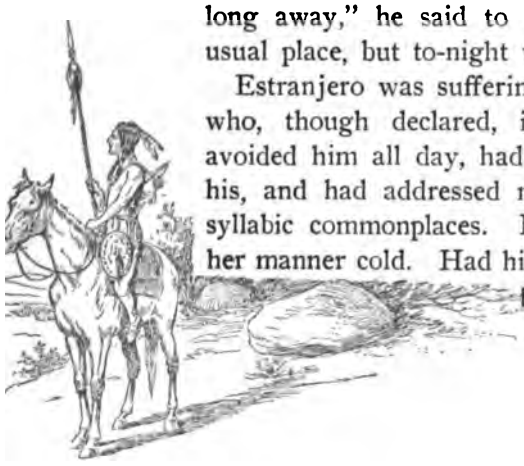
CHAPTER X

THE RAID

The rodeo was over, the wickiups deserted, the barbecue fires dead. Carriages and wagons carrying the guests had been departing since early morning, and horseback riders with many a curvet had disappeared in the dust, and only a few chuck-wagons here and there, surrounded by lounging cowboys and with remudas feeding on the plain, remained when evening fell. These, too, would be gone on the morrow, but for to-night they would herd their bunches and move on in the cool of the morning.

Supper was over at the Holcomb ranch. Alice lay in a hammock swung at the side of the veranda nearest the great rosebush. Her father paced back and forth, his hands behind his back, his fireless pipe held between his teeth.

"I can't make out why Pedro and Juan are so long away," he said to Estranjero, who sat in his usual place, but to-night with downcast gaze.



Estranjero was suffering the torments of the lover who, though declared, is unanswered. Alice had avoided him all day, had not once lifted her eyes to his, and had addressed no word to him but monosyllabic commonplaces. Her face was colorless, and her manner cold. Had his presumption offended her?

"The Indians had answered the ranchers" — Page 60

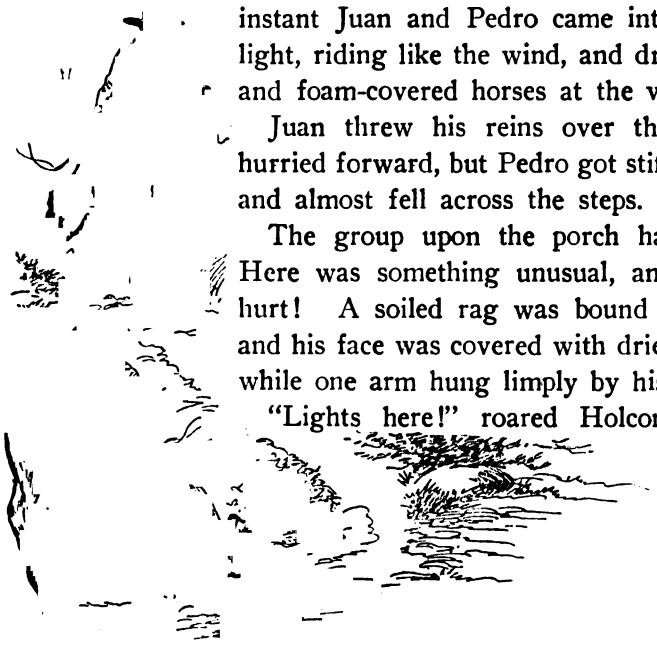
the underbrush is so dry. It may be a camp fire, but that's hardly likely."

They all watched the glow as it died and rose again and flamed and sank. It was nearly ten o'clock when Holcomb resumed his restless pacing.

"I sent Juan and Pedro to round up a bunch of steers that we couldn't find when we brought in the herd three days ago. Kendall said he saw them a couple of weeks ago feeding in a cienega on the edge of the desert. Juan and Pedro knew the place, and they ought to have been back before dark to-night at the very latest. I don't know why I feel so uneasy, but I have a sort of premonition that something has happened."

"Hark!" cried Alice, "I hear something."

Holcomb listened and sure enough there was the thud of the hoofs of galloping horses, and the next instant Juan and Pedro came into view in the starlight, riding like the wind, and drew up their panting and foam-covered horses at the veranda steps.



Juan threw his reins over the horse's neck and hurried forward, but Pedro got stiffly and lamely down and almost fell across the steps.

The group upon the porch had started forward. Here was something unusual, and Pedro! He was hurt! A soiled rag was bound across his forehead and his face was covered with dried and clotted blood, while one arm hung limply by his side.

"Lights here!" roared Holcomb, and Vera and

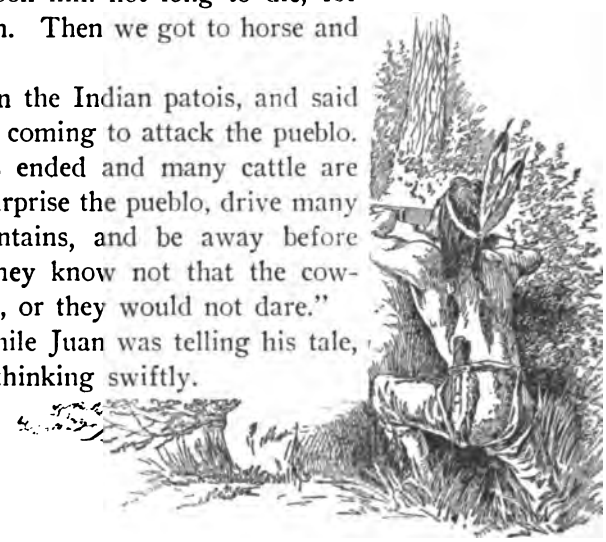
Francesca hurried from the kitchen at the call, both carrying flickering candles.

"Señor," cried the usually phlegmatic Juan. "Hasten, Señor, for the love of God! The Indians! They have killed the men at the mill and set the mill on fire. Pedro and I saw the fire, and as we were nearly there with the cattle, we hurried a little. From an open spot we saw Indians making their dance around it, so we hid our horses in the woods and crept up like foxes. We knew there were four men there, and we saw them all dead and scalped, lying one here and one there.

"All this we saw, Pedro and I, and were creeping back to the horses, like snakes, upon the belly, when Pedro fell over an Indian, without doubt one who had been sent to watch. Quick as a cat Pedro grasped his throat with both hands, so that he might not call out, and before I could stab him, he cut Pedro here upon the head and arm. It took him not long to die, for I stabbed again and again. Then we got to horse and here we are."

All this Juan related in the Indian patois, and said further, "Señor, they are coming to attack the pueblo. They know the rodeo is ended and many cattle are near, and they think to surprise the pueblo, drive many cattle off into the mountains, and be away before they can be caught. They know not that the cowboys are not yet all gone, or they would not dare."

Philip had come up while Juan was telling his tale, and El Estranjero was thinking swiftly.



"We must raise the alarm at once," he said.

Holcomb turned to Estranjero. "Take Juan to guide you, and Manuel, Marco, and Jose," he said. "Go back toward the mill and ambush them where the trail turns toward the pueblo. When we hear you begin firing, we will be ready for them.

"You, Philip, take the roan, ride to every cow-camp out there on the prairie, tell them what's up and ask them to bring their remudas and wagons in, and all their men to help us. I will go to the Plaza and light the bonfire that is always ready there as a signal of danger, and you, Alice, and the women will be safe here unless the pueblo should be taken, and it won't be, now that their surprise is going to be a failure."

In half an hour's time every man in the pueblo and the thirty cowboys that were with the outfits were busy throwing up a crescent-shaped breastwork in front of the chapel, one end of the defense resting against the high adobe wall about its patio, and the other against an adobe-walled corral a short distance away. The operations were conducted with the utmost silence and haste. All the lights in the pueblo were extinguished, as though the inhabitants were wrapped in slumber.

It was not merely for defense that these preparations were made. Whether the force should be large or small, the settlers determined to give the Indians a well-merited lesson.

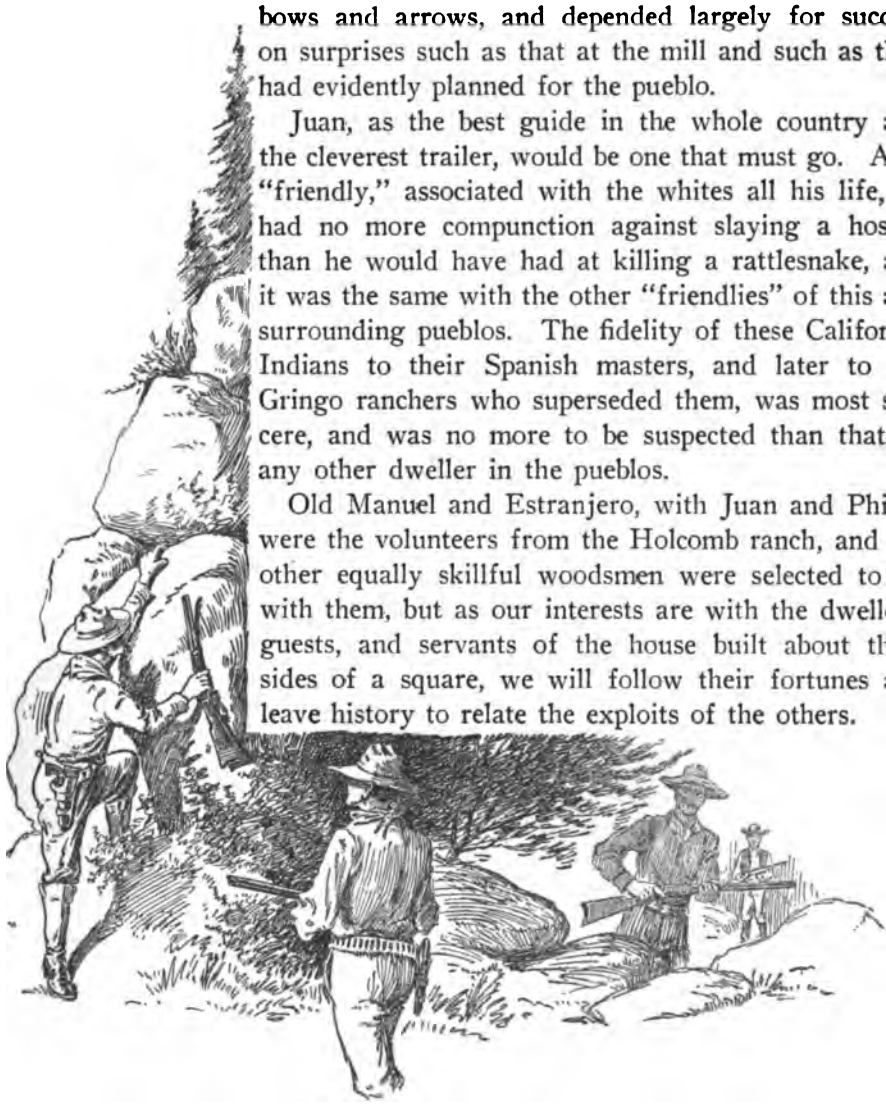
For years the Indians of the Pah-Ute and Chimanueva tribes had annoyed the ranchers of the neigh-

Indians surrounding horses

was at once apparent. As El Estranjero, Philip and Holcomb sat at table the next morning at breakfast, the gravity of the situation was discussed, and it was decided that ten well armed men would be able to cope with the Indians on a still hunt, for the savages had only poor and antiquated rifles, tomahawks, and bows and arrows, and depended largely for success on surprises such as that at the mill and such as they had evidently planned for the pueblo.

Juan, as the best guide in the whole country and the cleverest trailer, would be one that must go. As a "friendly," associated with the whites all his life, he had no more compunction against slaying a hostile than he would have had at killing a rattlesnake, and it was the same with the other "friendlies" of this and surrounding pueblos. The fidelity of these California Indians to their Spanish masters, and later to the Gringo ranchers who superseded them, was most sincere, and was no more to be suspected than that of any other dweller in the pueblos.

Old Manuel and Estranjero, with Juan and Philip, were the volunteers from the Holcomb ranch, and six other equally skillful woodsmen were selected to go with them, but as our interests are with the dwellers, guests, and servants of the house built about three sides of a square, we will follow their fortunes and leave history to relate the exploits of the others.

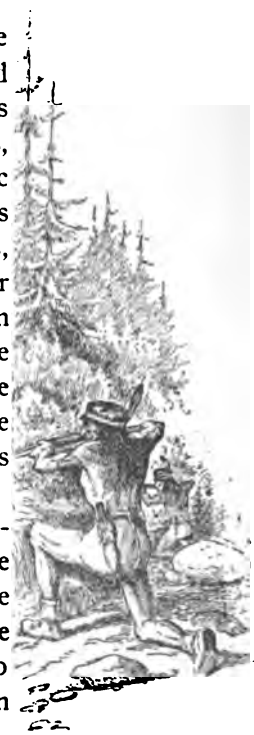


CHAPTER XI

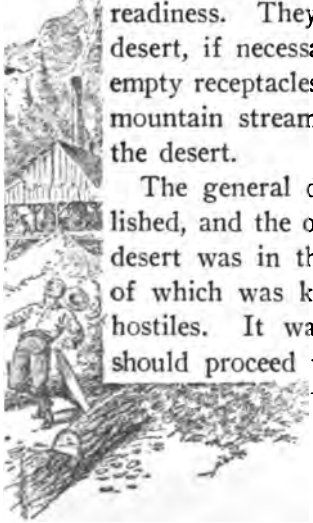
PHILIP

Philip Allen had been but a week at Elevado, and in that time he had "experienced more thrills," to use his own expression, than would have been his lot in months or perhaps years of the placid life of the Massachusetts village where he was born.

He was speaking of this as he lounged on the ground in the patio near Alice, who, heavy-eyed and pallid from the excitement and conflict of emotions through which she had passed in the last few days, was sitting on a low bench listening to his enthusiastic account of the night's battle. In half an hour he was to start for the mountains on the trail of the hostiles, and was now waiting until Manuel and the other servants should have the canteens and water casks in readiness. They intended to follow the foe into the desert, if necessary, and would bear with them these empty receptacles, that they might fill them from some mountain stream if they found it advisable to cross the desert.



The general direction of the trail was well established, and the only points at which it could cross the desert was in the line of the water-holes, every one of which was known to Juan, and of course to the hostiles. It was decided that Manuel and Marco should proceed with their water vessels to a chosen



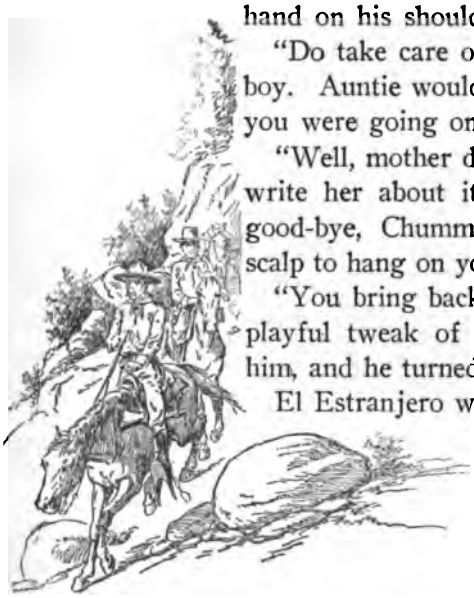
point, making a detour by a trail that the savages were not likely to pass, one man to act as scout and the other as convoy.

Philip was telling Alice these things and, as he lay at her feet, his handsome, eager face raised to hers, the two made a picture which El Estranjero, then approaching from the meadow through the gate in the cypress hedge, noticed with a pang.

"What was it that Philip was saying so eagerly to her?" he thought. "Was he telling her that he was going into danger, that her image would be with him in the dim fastness of the forest, that she was the star of his hope?"

What he was actually saying was:

"Well, now, Chummie," her pet name with him from childhood, for they had grown up together like a sister and brother, "I must be stirring around lively." And he rose and she stood beside him and put her hand on his shoulder.



"Do take care of yourself, Phil, you're such a rash boy. Auntie would be crazy with anxiety if she knew you were going on such a dangerous trip."

"Well, mother doesn't know, and see that you don't write her about it till I come back. Now kiss me good-bye, Chummie, and I'll bring you a Pah-Ute scalp to hang on your lodge pole."

"You bring back your own scalp," she said, with a playful tweak of his waving forelock as she kissed him, and he turned away.

El Estranjero was too far distant to hear the words

or see the expression upon the two faces. What he did see was the leaning forward of the graceful body of the woman he loved toward the handsome Philip, and the touching of their lips in that farewell kiss.

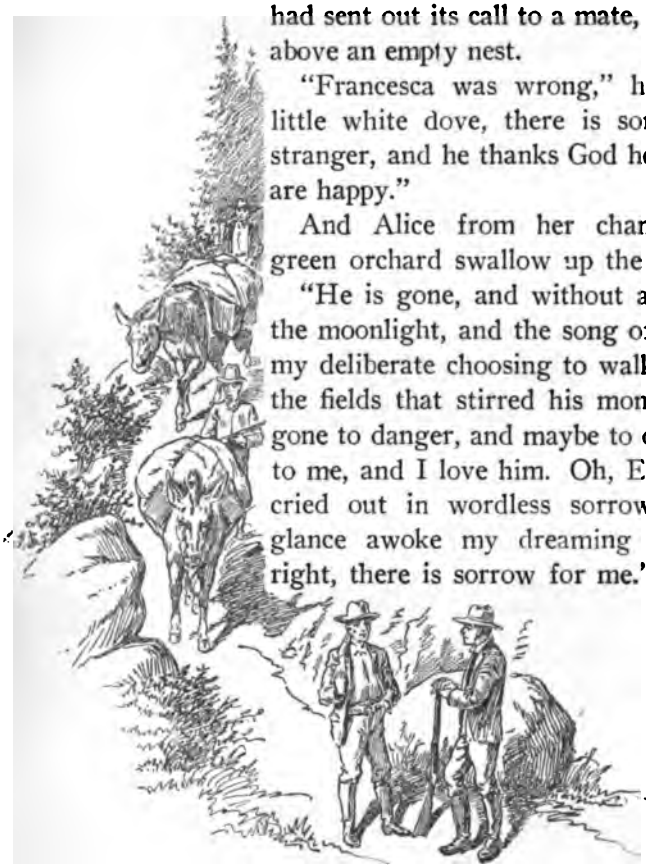
Unseen by either, he made his way into the house from the opposite side, secured his gun and canteen, and with a heart pulsing with pain that whitened his face to the very lips, joined Juan, who, with two pack horses laden with the rations of the little party, waited for him at the Plaza.

Behind him he heard Philip call, but he did not turn his head. Thinking he had not made himself heard, Philip sprinted to walk by his side, but as El Estranjero was never loquacious and Philip was ever talkative, he did not notice that his companion was unusually abstracted.

As they strode along, El Estranjero took a mental inventory of Philip.

"Yes," he said to himself, "he is a handsome lad, and a frank and honorable one. He has wealth, education, youth, and I lack all these. He is her own cousin, but cousins often marry very happily. She has chosen him, that is enough for me. I will be man enough to bear it, and I will watch over him as though he were my brother. I will give my life if need be for him. She shall be happy."

Yet even these generous resolves did not serve to allay his anguish. He loved and was unloved. His heart, for the first time of which he was conscious,



had sent out its call to a mate, and must brood forever above an empty nest.

"Francesca was wrong," he thought. "Señorita, little white dove, there is sorrow, but it is for the stranger, and he thanks God he can bear it if only you are happy."

And Alice from her chamber window saw the green orchard swallow up the forms of the two men.

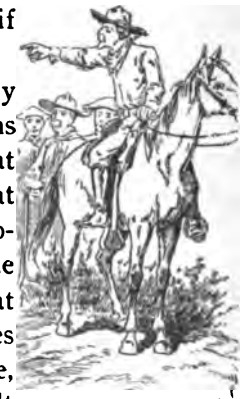
"He is gone, and without a word for me. It was the moonlight, and the song of the mocking bird, and my deliberate choosing to walk alone with him across the fields that stirred his momentary passion. He is gone to danger, and maybe to death, without one word to me, and I love him. Oh, El Estranjero," her heart cried out in wordless sorrow, "Prince whose very glance awoke my dreaming spirit. Francesca was right, there is sorrow for me."

CHAPTER XII

A WOODLAND DRAMA

El Estranjero was chosen by his comrades to command the expedition, and two hours before noon the start was made. The trail taken by the savages in their retreat was found to lead in the direction of Lytle Creek. Together the whole party followed the trail to a beautiful spot on the banks of the stream and there halted for a council.

El Estranjero then made known his plan. He and Juan would scout far ahead of the party along the main trail. Philip and another would act as rear guard, to prevent surprise from that quarter in case stragglers from the main band should themselves be scouts. The other six men were to guard the ammunition and rations and to be alert to attack if a foe should be encountered.



This little force of white men seems ridiculously small when compared to the large band of Indians they were pursuing. But it must be remembered that the enemy was poorly equipped with arms, and that their marksmanship was even poorer than their equipment, except, of course, with their own weapon, the bow, and that was a toy that could only wound at close range. The guns possessed by the savages were of such antiquated pattern and inferior range, and the skilled sharpshooters in this little party felt

that it would be accidental if any one should be brought down by them.

The Indians were also much encumbered by their wounded, and it was Estranjero's purpose to come up with them in flank and then the marksmen could pick them off one by one in that bush warfare for which they were so justly celebrated.

As he and Juan were to proceed with so much more rapidity than the main body, a camping spot familiar to all was agreed upon and they set forth. As they crept rapidly forward, noting every "sign" by the way, his mind settled into a mood of stern endurance for whatever fate might have in store for him. As he had no past, he now seemed to have no future with any promise of joy. The present with its duty must therefore absorb him.

About an hour after midday, he and Juan came to a point on the trail, at the left of which was a steep knoll, unencumbered with brush, which gave a wide outlook over the surrounding country.

"Señor," said the Indian in a low voice, "I will creep up to that ridge yonder and lying behind that big rock will see what I can. Perhaps the Utes are now so far in the mountains that they think it safe to make camp fire."

"Go," answered El Estranjero, "I will wait for you over here."

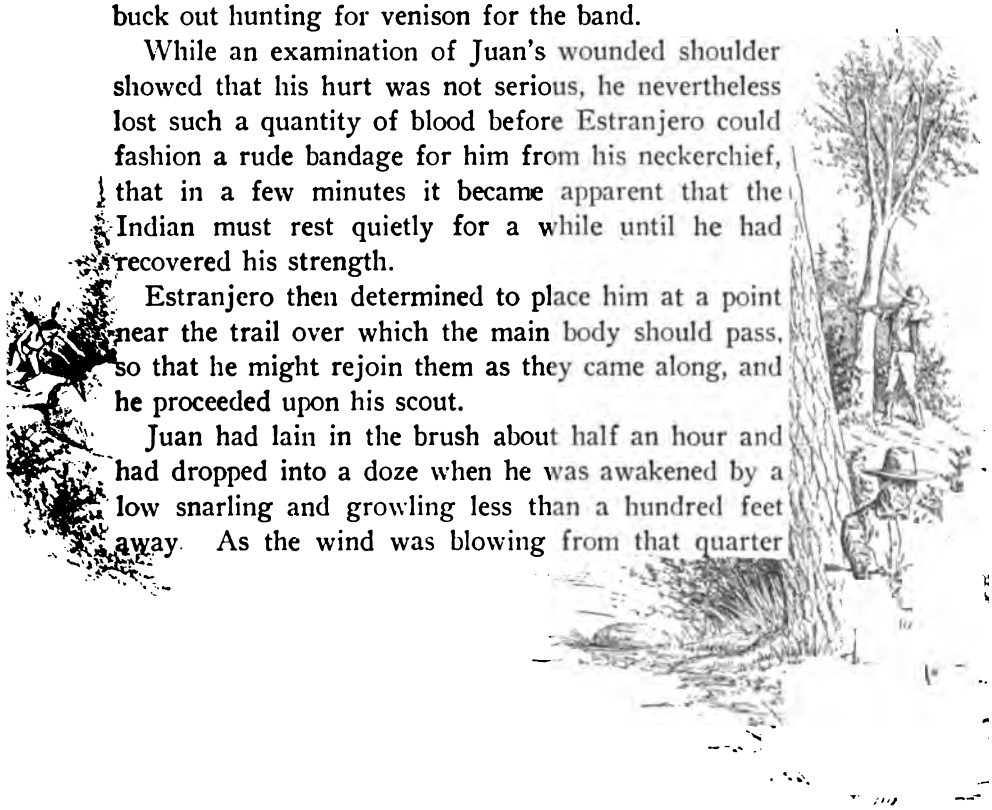
Crouching so that his head might not be above the underbrush, Juan began the ascent. Scarcely had he proceeded a hundred feet from their cover before

Estranjero heard the sharp twang of a bowstring, and saw Juan clap his hand to his shoulder and spring behind a boulder. In an instant, locating the foe by the sound of the bowstring, Estranjero sprang upon him with clubbed rifle and struck him to the earth before he could fire another arrow or make an outcry.

Juan swiftly crept back to where he stood looking down upon the unconscious enemy, and with a stroke of his knife despatched him.

They made a quick and careful examination of the brush to assure themselves that there were no more Indians near and then proceeded with even greater caution, that they might not stumble over some stray buck out hunting for venison for the band.

While an examination of Juan's wounded shoulder showed that his hurt was not serious, he nevertheless lost such a quantity of blood before Estranjero could fashion a rude bandage for him from his neckerchief, that in a few minutes it became apparent that the Indian must rest quietly for a while until he had recovered his strength.



Estranjero then determined to place him at a point near the trail over which the main body should pass, so that he might rejoin them as they came along, and he proceeded upon his scout.

Juan had lain in the brush about half an hour and had dropped into a doze when he was awakened by a low snarling and growling less than a hundred feet away. As the wind was blowing from that quarter

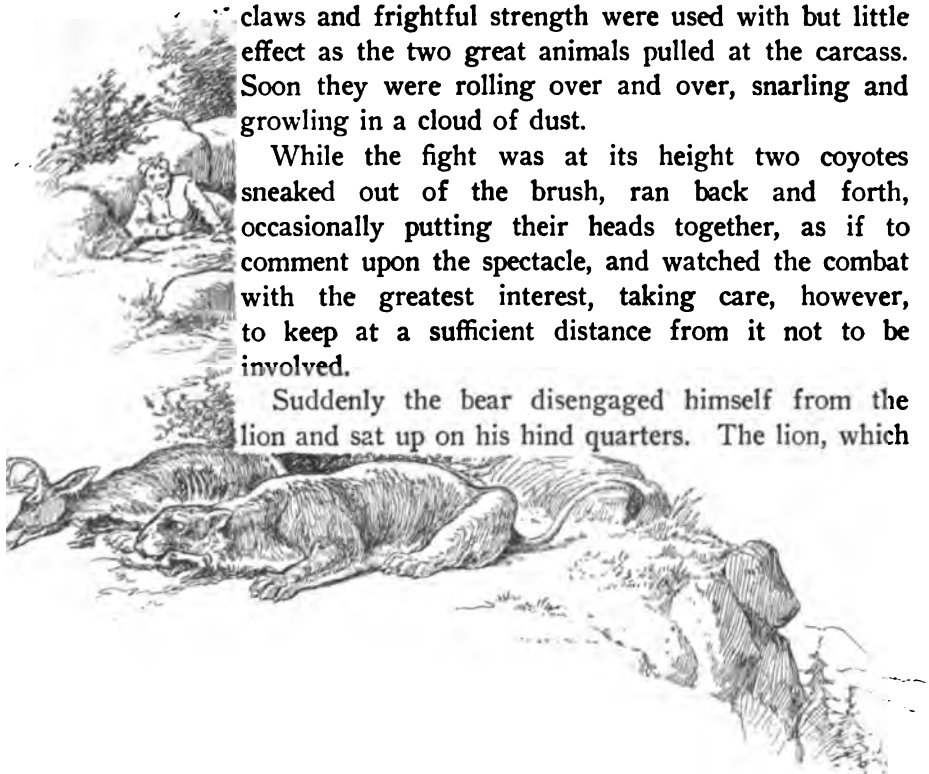
and the animal, whatever it was, would not be likely to get his scent, the Indian cautiously wriggled to a place where he could see what was transpiring.

The body of a deer, with an arrow sticking over its heart, showing that it had been wounded, probably by the Indian he had killed, and had run thus far before bleeding to death, lay at the edge of a precipice. A huge mountain lion, whose every muscle stood out rigidly against his tawny hide, was rapidly devouring the carcass. Toward the lion ambled a big black bear, snarling as if to announce that he was determined to partake of the banquet. The lion, without ceasing from its gorging, snarled a dissent. The bear, with a terrific roar, sprang upon the carcass, cuffing the lion with both fore paws alternately, while he hung to the venison with his strong jaws.

The paws of the lion with their long fearsome claws and frightful strength were used with but little effect as the two great animals pulled at the carcass. Soon they were rolling over and over, snarling and growling in a cloud of dust.

While the fight was at its height two coyotes sneaked out of the brush, ran back and forth, occasionally putting their heads together, as if to comment upon the spectacle, and watched the combat with the greatest interest, taking care, however, to keep at a sufficient distance from it not to be involved.

Suddenly the bear disengaged himself from the lion and sat up on his hind quarters. The lion, which

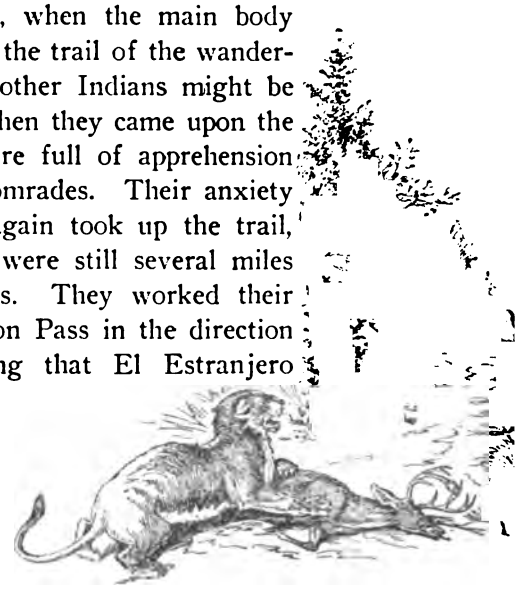


was between him and the precipice, crouched to spring. Quicker than a flash the bear flung his huge bulk forward. They met in midair, clinched, and snarling and growling, rolled off the edge of the precipice and fell to their death.

The two coyotes set up a short, sharp yelp, and with teeth grinning and tongues lolling out as though in demoniac mirth over the result of the combat, seized upon the venison, which had been torn in two pieces in the fight, loped away and disappeared from view in the brush.

The silent Indian watched this forest drama with the utmost delight, and when the coyotes trotted off with the spoil, he chuckled softly. Cautiously creeping to the point where the lion and the bear had vanished, he peered over. The chasm that yawned beneath was fully fifteen hundred feet in depth, almost a sheer drop, so the fate of the combatants was certain.

It was fully two hours later than Estranjero had calculated they would appear, when the main body came up. They had followed the trail of the wandering hunter, thinking perhaps other Indians might be concealed in the brush, and when they came upon the body of the dead savage, were full of apprehension for the safety of their two comrades. Their anxiety was now relieved and they again took up the trail, but night came on and they were still several miles from the place of rendezvous. They worked their way up the creek, across Cajon Pass in the direction of Bear Valley and, thinking that El Estranjero



would take the back trail when he found they did not appear, they bivouacked for the night in a place where the pine needles lay thick under the trees, and were soon sleeping the deep sleep of fatigue.

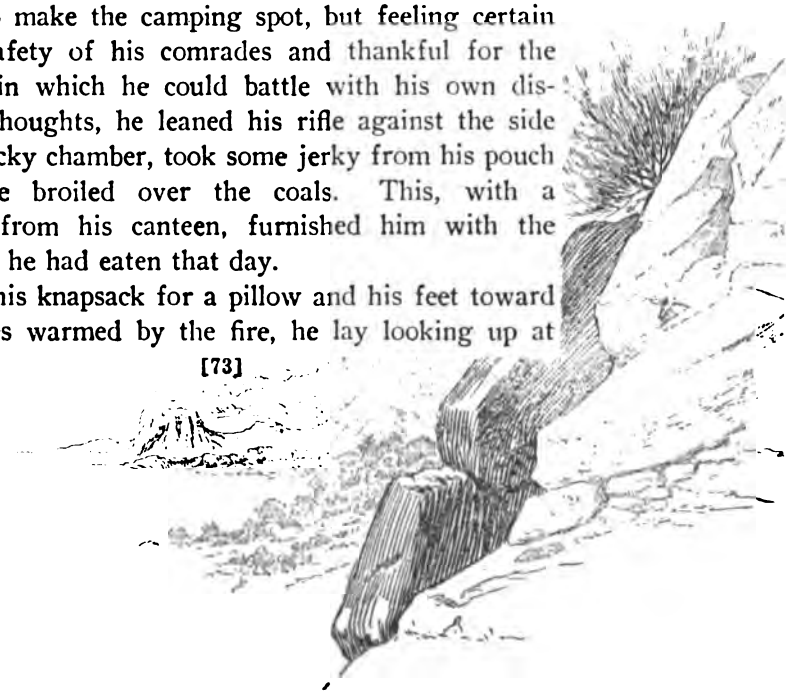
CHAPTER XIII

A NARROW ESCAPE

It was almost dark when El Estranjero arrived at the rendezvous agreed upon in the morning and threw himself at the foot of a rock to wait for the coming of the rest of the party. As the shadows grew deeper he determined to make camp. The spot was one he had often visited before. It was in a sort of a cove, under a hill, sheltered on three sides by boulders but open to the sky. Here a camp fire could be made whose glow would be hidden from prowling foes, and as the wind began to blow with the penetrating chill of the mountain night air, El Estranjero piled up small sticks that would soon burn into coals, heaped some little boulders in front of them that they might be heated through, and made a fire.

He at length became convinced that the party was unable to make the camping spot, but feeling certain of the safety of his comrades and thankful for the solitude in which he could battle with his own disturbing thoughts, he leaned his rifle against the side of the rocky chamber, took some jerky from his pouch which he broiled over the coals. This, with a draught from his canteen, furnished him with the first food he had eaten that day.

With his knapsack for a pillow and his feet toward the stones warmed by the fire, he lay looking up at



the stars. Pure and calm they twinkled in the blue depths of the night sky, and some ray from them seemed to shine upon the darkness of his despairing thoughts. The mysterious woodland sounds, the soft sighing of the night wind, the insistent cry of an owl, the faint stirring of the restless wood creatures soothed and lulled him. The bosom of the earth was that of the only mother he knew, and he felt a strange kinship with the wilderness, like one who, buffeted and weary, had come back at last to rest among his own people.

Here in the woods there was only the savage love that knows no denial. Here was the power of the strong, the survival of the fittest. "What," he mused, "has civilization given to man that is worth its primal struggle and bloodshed?"

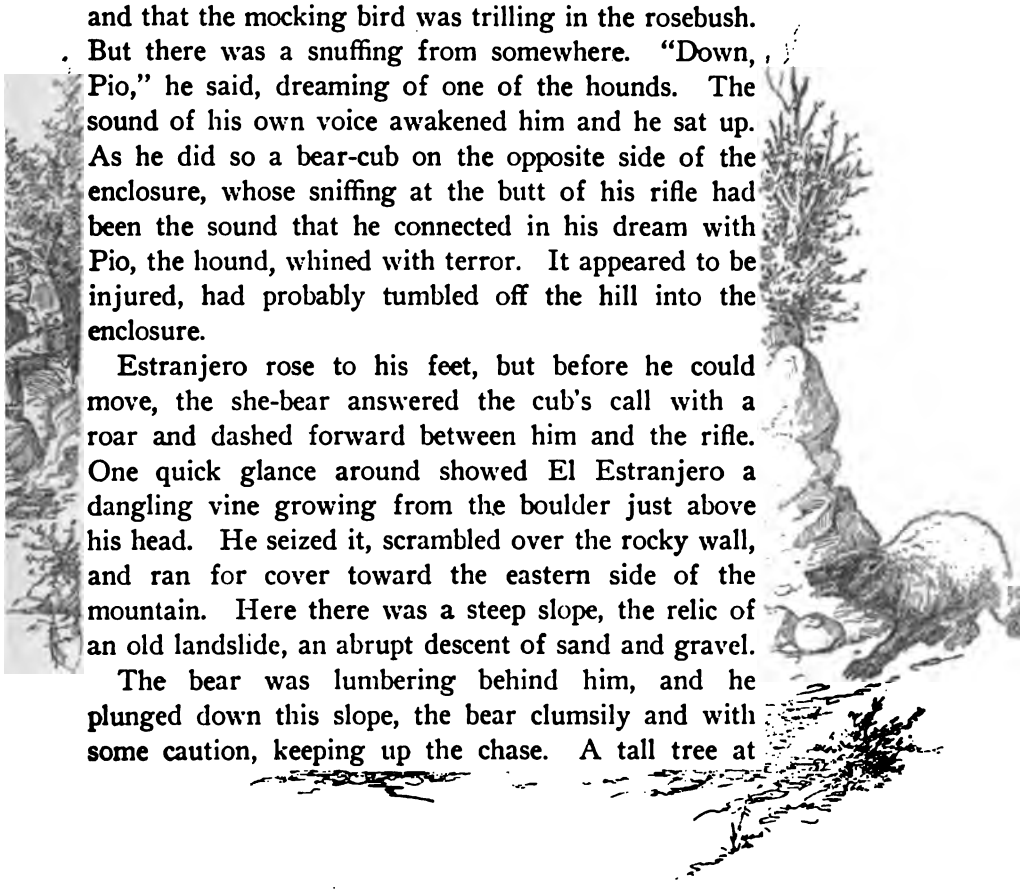
As if for answer, he had a vision of a room warm with fire light and lamp light. The pictured walls, the full book-shelves, open piano in the corner with music upon the rack invited to peaceful rest, and, yes, there in a low chair gazing with pensive eyes into the blaze, was a sweet-faced, golden-haired woman. This morning her lips had been pressed against those of Philip, it was of Philip she was thinking now.

Estranjero folded his arms across his breast as if to still its throbbing. "Ah, fool!" he said savagely to himself. "You asked the question, your heart gave the answer. Civilization has given us that. The sheltered home, the love that can forgive and can renounce. Aye, the love that can outlast brute passion,

and that is at the root of all the comfort, the beauty, the refinement that makes real life."

He had not slept for two nights, and the exertions of the day burdened him with a death-like fatigue. Soon the heavy eyes closed and he slumbered.

It was at the first streak of dawn that he stirred in his sleep. The birds were singing, and but half awake he thought himself again on the veranda with Alice, and that the mocking bird was trilling in the rosebush. But there was a snuffing from somewhere. "Down, Pio," he said, dreaming of one of the hounds. The sound of his own voice awakened him and he sat up. As he did so a bear-cub on the opposite side of the enclosure, whose sniffing at the butt of his rifle had been the sound that he connected in his dream with Pio, the hound, whined with terror. It appeared to be injured, had probably tumbled off the hill into the enclosure.



Estranjero rose to his feet, but before he could move, the she-bear answered the cub's call with a roar and dashed forward between him and the rifle. One quick glance around showed El Estranjero a dangling vine growing from the boulder just above his head. He seized it, scrambled over the rocky wall, and ran for cover toward the eastern side of the mountain. Here there was a steep slope, the relic of an old landslide, an abrupt descent of sand and gravel.

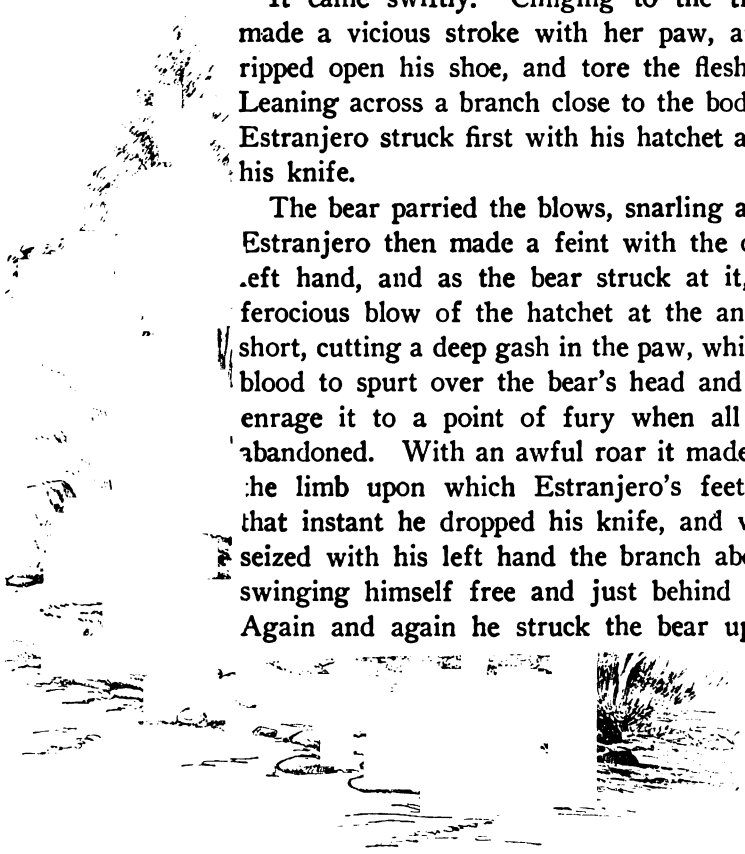
The bear was lumbering behind him, and he plunged down this slope, the bear clumsily and with some caution, keeping up the chase. A tall tree at

the mouth of the ravine offered him a temporary safety, and he scaled it and stood with every muscle tense and every sense alert.

The bear sniffed for a moment around the bole of the tree, and then proceeded also to ascend. As the bear approached him, El Estranjero climbed higher among the branches. His quick eye had selected a spot for a foothold, where he could have his arms free and his back braced. Attaining this place, he loosened his hatchet and hunting knife, and with a weapon in each hand, awaited the onslaught.

It came swiftly. Clinging to the tree, the bear made a vicious stroke with her paw, and the claws ripped open his shoe, and tore the flesh of his foot. Leaning across a branch close to the body of the tree Estranjero struck first with his hatchet and then with his knife.

The bear parried the blows, snarling and growling. Estranjero then made a feint with the dagger in his left hand, and as the bear struck at it, he aimed a ferocious blow of the hatchet at the animal. It fell short, cutting a deep gash in the paw, which caused the blood to spurt over the bear's head and body and to enrage it to a point of fury when all caution was abandoned. With an awful roar it made a spring for the limb upon which Estranjero's feet rested. At that instant he dropped his knife, and with a spring seized with his left hand the branch above his head, swinging himself free and just behind the assailant. Again and again he struck the bear upon the head



"Aimed a ferocious blow of the hatchet at the animal."—Page 76

CHAPTER XIV

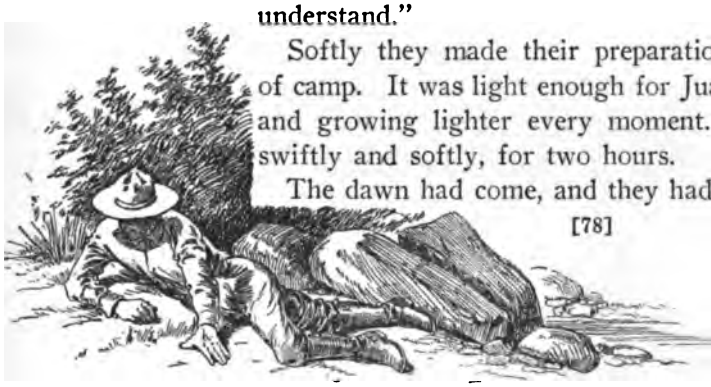
IN TOUCH WITH THE ENEMY

The pain of Juan's wound made him restless. He tossed and turned upon the ground vainly seeking sleep, and at last sat up with his arms about his knees to await the dawn. Near him Philip slept the sleep of healthy youth. They had chosen to lie a little apart from the others, and finally, while the sky was still the deep velvet purple of the night and the morning star shone clearly over them, Juan laid his hand upon Philip's shoulder.

He was wide awake in an instant and on the alert. "What is it, Juan?" he whispered.

"Señor," answered Juan, "Indian is like a good hound. He know things he cannot tell and cannot tell how he knows them. Señor El Estranjero did not come back. I go to find him. He need Juan."

"Then I will go too," said Philip. "Here, I will lay a stick where we have been, with two others to make an arrowhead pointing the way we have gone. When the others awaken and see them I think they will understand."



Softly they made their preparations and stole out of camp. It was light enough for Juan to see his way, and growing lighter every moment. On they went, swiftly and softly, for two hours.

The dawn had come, and they had now reached the

camping spot indicated by El Estranjero as their rendezvous for the preceding night. They found there the ashes of a dead fire, Estranjero's rifle leaning against a great boulder, his knapsack on the ground, still bearing the imprint where his head had lain upon it, and all about the huge tracks of a bear and the smaller footprints of a cub.

"My God!" cried Philip. "Look, Juan!"

Juan, the clever trailer, had taken in the whole camp at a glance and had also noticed the dangling vine and the moss and lichen recently scraped from the side of the boulder. "See, Señor, he went over the rock. Quick, let us follow. This is a hot trail."

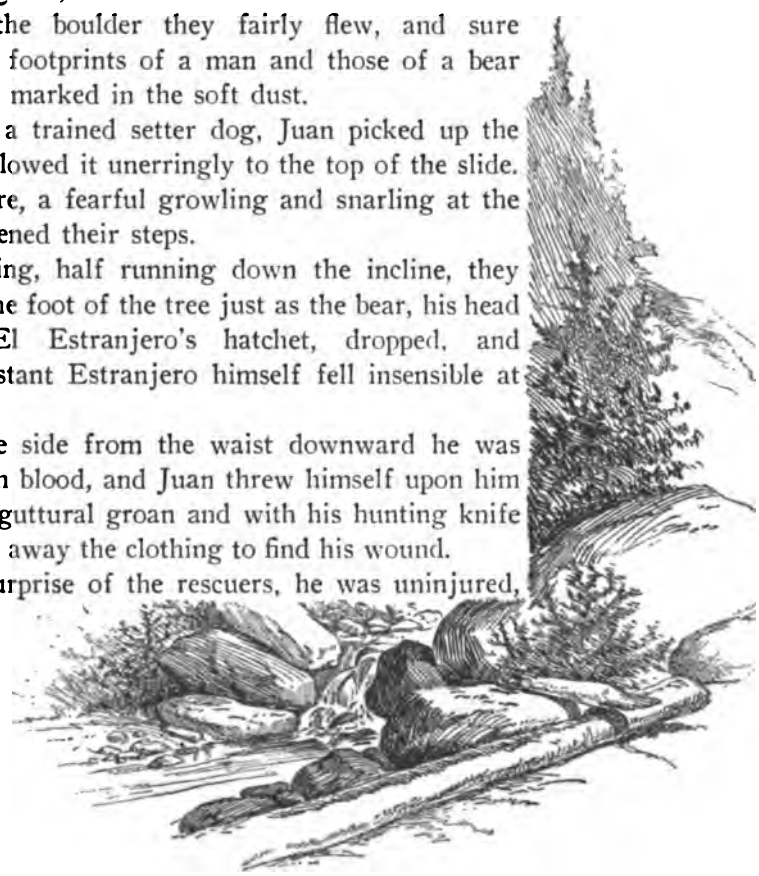
Around the boulder they fairly flew, and sure enough, the footprints of a man and those of a bear were plainly marked in the soft dust.

Quick as a trained setter dog, Juan picked up the trail and followed it unerringly to the top of the slide. Arrived there, a fearful growling and snarling at the bottom hastened their steps.

Half rolling, half running down the incline, they arrived at the foot of the tree just as the bear, his head cleft by El Estranjero's hatchet, dropped, and the next instant Estranjero himself fell insensible at their feet.

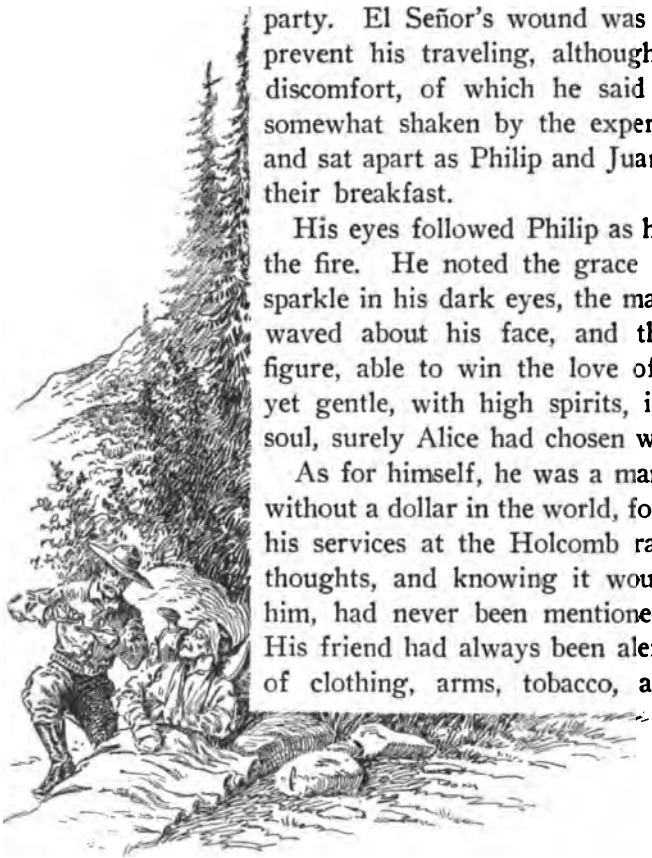
Upon one side from the waist downward he was covered with blood, and Juan threw himself upon him with a low guttural groan and with his hunting knife began to cut away the clothing to find his wound.

To the surprise of the rescuers, he was uninjured,



except for the deep scratches made by the bear's claws upon his foot, and was merely stunned by the fall and faint from the loss of blood.

He soon recovered consciousness, sat up and looked about him, and was able to relate what had happened. Juan dressed the wounded foot with great tenderness and skill, entirely forgetting his own wound, and the three made their way back to the boulder camp, taking with them some steaks cut from the dead bear for their breakfast and future provision for the scouting party. El Señor's wound was not serious enough to prevent his traveling, although with some pain and discomfort, of which he said nothing; but he was somewhat shaken by the experience of the morning, and sat apart as Philip and Juan broiled the steaks for their breakfast.



His eyes followed Philip as he busied himself about the fire. He noted the grace of his movements, the sparkle in his dark eyes, the manner in which his hair waved about his face, and thought him a gallant figure, able to win the love of any woman. Brave, yet gentle, with high spirits, iron nerve and a loyal soul, surely Alice had chosen well.

As for himself, he was a man without a name, and without a dollar in the world, for the idea of money for his services at the Holcomb ranch never entered his thoughts, and knowing it would be likely to offend him, had never been mentioned by his benefactor. His friend had always been alert to his slightest need of clothing, arms, tobacco, all that was essential,

and beyond that El Estranjero had never before thought.

Now, however, his mind awoke to the fact that he had nothing to offer Alice but a love that was willing to serve her to the death, yes, and beyond death. But with Philip by her side, endowed as he was with all the good gifts of person and estate that would make her happy, his love would be turned back upon itself to torture him.

Yet a man must do a man's part. He must not yield to grief, disappointment or pain, and so he smiled wanly over Philip's merry quips as he broiled the bear steak, and took his breakfast at his hands, though he ate little and spoke not at all.

The rest of the party appeared before the sun was well arisen, and the forward movement was resumed, El Estranjero and Juan in the lead as the day before, making nothing of their wounds, though Juan's shoulder was sore and stiff, and El Señor limped with every step.

To-day the little party traveled in couples, at some distance apart. A little beyond the boulder camp the trail branched in three directions and it was evident that the Indian band had divided here into three bands, probably the better to provide for their needs as in this way they would be able to secure more game. Each couple of scouts, therefore, had his work apart from the others, four being left on the main trail as a guard to the pack horses.

Philip, as the day before, acted as rear guard, his

perfect knowledge of the mountains standing him in good stead in making wide detours to search for signs.

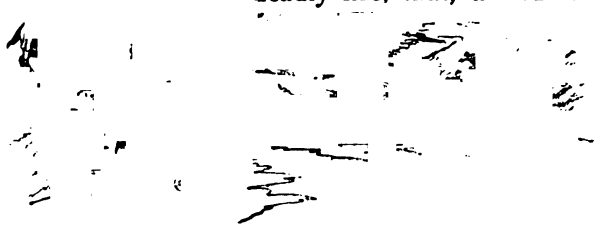
No schoolboy at a match game of football could enjoy the sport more than Philip did this expedition. To him it was a part of the "thrilling" process of which he had spoken to Alice, and he would have thought it the greatest of misfortunes had the attack upon the pueblo, and the pursuit of the Indians occurred before he had arrived at Elevado. Scores of times he congratulated himself upon his good luck in actually participating in this phase of western life, of which he had so often read.

Late in the afternoon he heard, far to the left of him, where one branch of the trail made a bend, the report of a gun, followed by a rifle shot, and at intervals another and another. He started instantly at a free run toward the sound.

A few minutes masterly sprinting brought him to the top of a rise, and looking downward into a little clearing, he saw two of the party of scouts, back to back and partially sheltered by a boulder, surrounded at a little distance by ten Indians.

Throwing himself on the ground behind a log, Philip opened a well-directed fire.

Disconcerted by this unseen enemy, the Indians exposed themselves to the range of the scouts. A lively fusillade of arrows and bullets was directed toward his cover, but the two white men standing together now broke for the brush, and from it kept up such a deadly fire, that, united to Philip's execution, it soon



"Philip opened a well-directed fire."—Page 82

CHAPTER XV

THE CAPTIVE

In a little secluded valley between two lofty mountains, the Pah-Utes had made their camp. They had traveled fast after their raid upon the pueblo, and the three divisions of the band were now united. Their scouts and runners had no knowledge of the fate that hung upon the rear in the shape of the sharpshooters and scouts whose adventures we have been relating. The delay of almost twelve hours between the raid and the setting out of the white men had served its purpose of convincing the Indians that the whites intended no pursuit, and would content themselves with defending the valley.

With so much care had El Estranjero planned the chase, and with so much skill had it been conducted, that the Indians had been entirely deceived and, now apparently safe, they determined to camp. Their scouts were called in and now in the late afternoon the hunters were out for venison and the warriors were resting in the shade.

All day Juan and Philip had kept close behind the enemy, skulking in the brush far enough in the rear to follow their every movement. Now that the camp was made they lay a half mile to the south of the spot in the thick brush, overlooking a mountain stream

that just below them broadened into a deep and quiet pool.

It was sunset and the nesting birds were fluttering to their rest, and the woodland creatures were undisturbed by the two concealed men who lay as quiet as though they were fallen tree trunks.

Finally Juan touched his companion with his foot and pointed downward. A squaw stood by the pool not twenty feet away. Instead of the square, shapeless figure characteristic of most of these Pah-Ute women, this squaw, who was very young, apparently about seventeen, was slight and lithe, and the pose of her slender figure had such an airy grace that Philip involuntarily raised himself upon his elbow, the better to observe her.

Her dress consisted of moccasins and leggins, a short skirt and loose tunic, all of well-tanned deer skin. About her neck was a chain made of the red seed buds of the wild rose, and the cincture wound about her forehead, under which her hair fell in two long braids almost to her waist, held an eagle's feather. Twined in the braids of her hair were chains of the same red seed buds.

Her dress was that of a favorite wife or daughter of a chief, and her bearing that of a princess of the wild. As the hidden watchers observed her, it became apparent that she was preparing to refresh herself by removing the dust of the long days and nights of swift travel. She drew off her moccasins and leggins, and to the great astonishment of the men in the

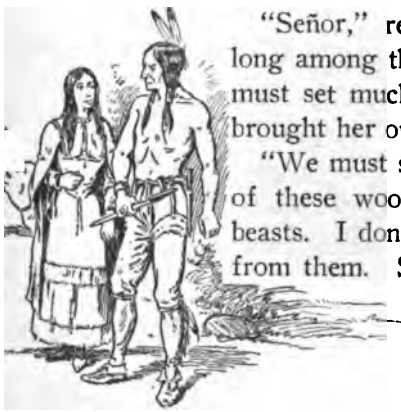
bushes, they saw that her slender, shapely limbs were as white as snow.

Her complexion, bronzed by wind and sun, was as dark as that of any other Indian girl, but looking closely at her face, upturned toward the evening light, Philip now saw that her features were regular and delicately formed, her eyes a clear blue, and her curling hair a dark brown, verging upon black.

"She is white," his lips framed, as he looked at Juan. "Yes, Señor," Juan replied in the same way, with a gesture warning silence.

The Indian girl laved her feet, hands and face in the cool, clear water, then replaced her moccasins and leggins, and crooning contentedly to herself, gathered up her tunic with her hand, forming a sort of bag, and, holding it thus, she garnered a quantity of the acorns lying everywhere beneath the trees, and disappeared in the direction of the camp.

"She cannot be a prisoner," Philip whispered to Juan, when she was out of sight, "for she comes and goes as she pleases, and acts as though she were one of them."



"Señor," replied the Indian, "she may have been long among them, and surely belongs to a chief. He must set much store by her, or he would never have brought her out with a war party."

"We must see," Philip declared. "I'll never go out of these woods and leave a white girl with those beasts. I don't care who she is, we must get her away from them. She stands a chance of getting killed by

some of our men. Jove, she's a lovely creature, the only handsome Indian squaw I ever saw, and she's a white woman."

A whispered consultation determined the two men to wait until they could see the smoke of the camp fire, which would indicate the return of the hunters, and then Philip would lie concealed on the top of the hill, where he could watch the movements of the Indians, while Juan was to wriggle through the brush to a point where he could both see and hear what went on about the fire.

Juan spoke and understood the Pah-Ute dialect and he surmised that on this night the Indians would council and determine what should be done. He was resolved to hear their plans and to carry them back to El Estranjero.

The girl moved freely about the camp, busying herself about the cooking fire. With a smooth stone she pounded her acorns in the hollow of a rock, and into a hole in the ground, rolled a stone which she heated at the fire. Upon the flat, hot surface of this she placed the cakes of acorn bread, covered them with grass and leaves, and with earth to hold the heat, and left them to bake.

The hunters brought in a fine buck, which they cut up into rations, which were equally divided, and soon several small fires were going, over which the venison was being charred at the ends of sharpened sticks held over the coals.

After the Indians had satisfied their hunger, Juan

counted forty braves assembled round the council fire. He wriggled himself quietly through the brush and crept into the shadow of a great boulder about twenty feet from the circle and out of the light of the fire, where he could hear all that was said.

At first the Indians sat silent and sullen, the chief with down-dropped chin and eyes fixed upon the blaze.

First one and then another brave arose and spoke of the hardships of the past few days, the failure of the raid, the death of some friend or brother, and finally one gigantic brave, encouraged by the sullen looks cast at the silent chief, openly blamed him with the failure of the expedition and pointedly asked him how he would dare to face the old men and squaws of the tribe in their far-away home, with only this little remnant of the band that had crossed the mountain with him.

Finally the chief arose, and with stately dignity answered the criticisms of the braves. He told them that his heart was filled with grief and shame over their losses, but that the Great Spirit was against them, and who could fight the Powers of the Air? He said that in a vision he had been warned to retreat as fast as possible, but that they would soon be in the region where it was impossible to kill the game. It was equally impossible to hunt widely in these mountains, for the whites would no doubt pursue them and take vengeance. Therefore he counselled a division of the band as before in three parts.

Ten of the bravest, with the gallant Thunder-face,

indicating the tall savage who had last spoken, should go to the valley and drive such cattle of the settlers as they might find feeding there, to the head of the Pass, and those would supply them with beef for the journey. All were then to meet again at a certain spot on the banks of the Mojave. He and a division of ten braves were to make as much haste as possible to the rendezvous, where the first ten with the stolen cattle were to meet them. The second band of twenty, including those who, on account of wounds, could only travel slowly, were to kill what game they safely could and meet the others there also.

Juan, when this plan was agreed upon, slipped quietly away to the hilltop where Philip lay, and the two with such haste as the most extreme caution would permit, made their way back to the trail, and traveling all night arrived at their own camp with this most important information, just at daybreak.

CHAPTER XVI

FRANCESCA'S SECRET

The days so full of adventure to El Estranjero and Philip, dragged heavily by with Alice. She had come suddenly into her woman's heritage of love and suffering, and her whole life seemed thrown into hopeless confusion. Her books and music, her rides over the brown meadows and into the near-by cañons no longer held interest for her. Her household duties were performed so mechanically that she was hardly conscious of them.

She was restless and listless by turns, but always there was the consciousness of emptiness and dissatisfaction almost too overpowering to be borne. She thought often of the strange actions of Francesca and remembered her agitation on the night, so long ago, when El Estranjero gave his first sign of consciousness, after days of stupor or delirium.

One afternoon when Francesca sat upon the ground in the patio, her hands busy with the rushes she was preparing for a basket, Alice came and stood by her side. For some time she watched the old woman's brown fingers nimbly flying in and out as she deftly fashioned the shape of her work. At last she knelt beside her.

"Francesca," she said, "how long have you served in this house?"

In her childhood Alice had used the Indian dialect with its large sprinkling of corrupted Spanish, as well as she spoke her mother tongue. This was the first time she had used it since her return to her home, and Francesca glanced at her with a gleam of pleasure upon her dark face. Of old, when her fair nursling was bent upon wheedling some dainty from her, or extorting some unusual and forbidden pleasure, she would speak to her in her own tongue.

Francesca at first made no answer, for she was slow of speech at all times.

"Come, now, Francesca, we haven't had a good talk for a long time," Alice continued, settling herself upon the ground and toying with the reeds. "How long since you first came to live with us in this house?"

"It was in the winter before the Señorita was born, that the Señor, her father, came with his young wife here," said the Indian woman. "Isidro, my husband, and I myself were born on this rancho, long ago before the Gringo came. It was our home. We did not wish to leave it."

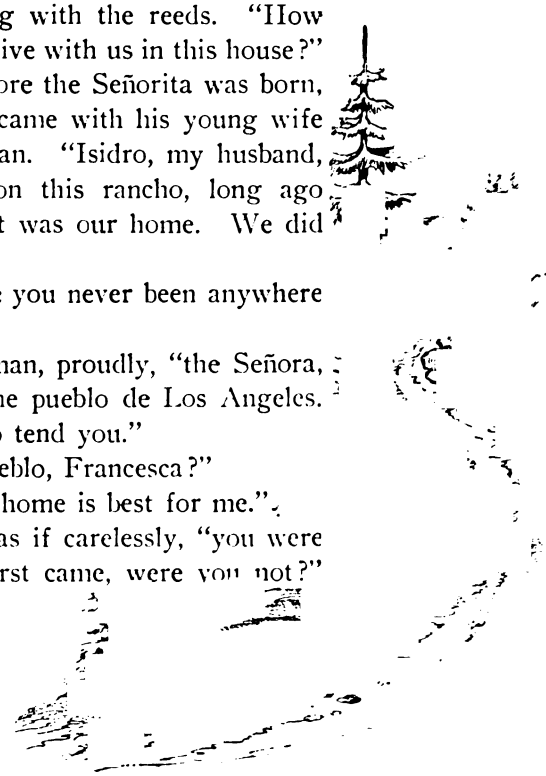
"And all these years have you never been anywhere else but here?"

"Once," said the old woman, proudly, "the Señora, your mother, took me to the pueblo de Los Angeles. You were a baby, I went to tend you."

"And did you like the pueblo, Francesca?"

"Non, Señorita, my own home is best for me."

"Francesca," Alice said, as if carelessly, "you were here when El Estranjero first came, were you not?"



The old woman glanced sharply at the girl, but she was humming a tune as she played with the reeds, and seemed to be simply amusing herself with the conversation.

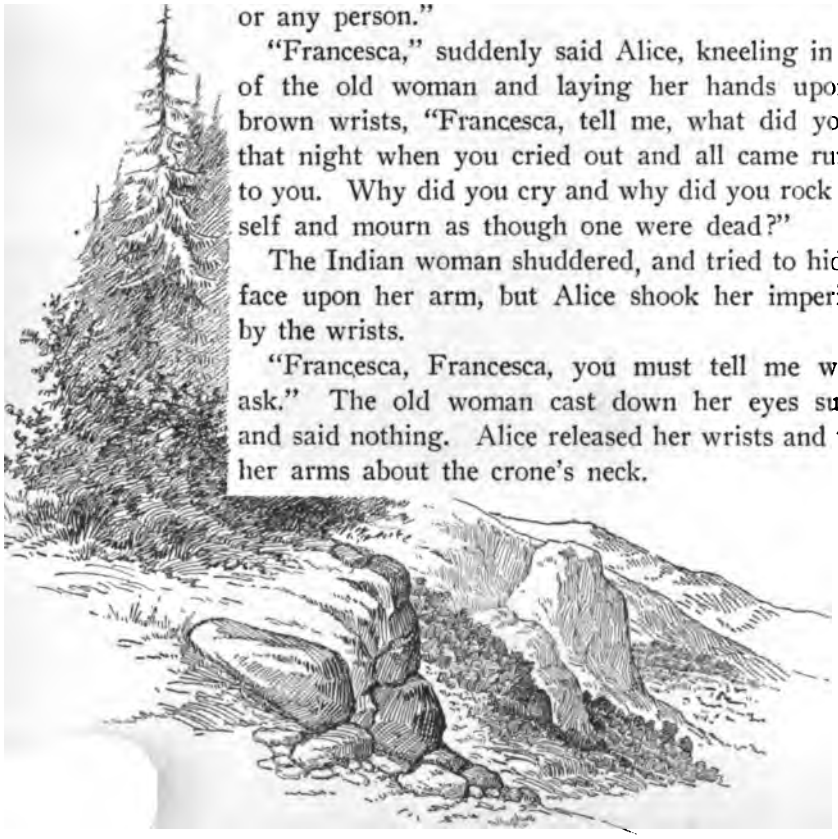
"I was here, Señorita."

"And you took care of him when he lay ill, did you not?"

"Always," replied Francesca, roused from her usual taciturnity. "Vera says she helped. Bah! Vera knows nothing about the sick. It was I and I only who bathed his head when he cried out and talked strange things."

"Francesca, did he ever speak of anybody or any place in his sickness?"

"Never, Señorita. Often I listened and tried to understand, but never a word did he say of any place or any person."



"Francesca," suddenly said Alice, kneeling in front of the old woman and laying her hands upon the brown wrists, "Francesca, tell me, what did you see that night when you cried out and all came running to you. Why did you cry and why did you rock yourself and mourn as though one were dead?"

The Indian woman shuddered, and tried to hide her face upon her arm, but Alice shook her imperiously by the wrists.

"Francesca, Francesca, you must tell me what I ask." The old woman cast down her eyes sullenly and said nothing. Alice released her wrists and threw her arms about the crone's neck.

"There, there, poor Francesca, I have grieved you. You know I love you and I thought you loved me," here her voice became plaintive. "I thought you surely loved me, but your Señorita has been away for so many years that you no longer love her nor wish to speak with her and tell her things that will amuse her as you did when she was a little girl."

She took her arms away from the unresponsive old woman and dropped dejectedly at her side, the tears shining in her eyes.

Francesca glanced at her from under her shaggy brows and her stolid face softened into tenderness. She put her arms about the young girl and drew her to her ample bosom, rocking her back and forth as if she were an infant.

"Ah, my Señorita," she crooned. "My poor little motherless white dove. Francesca loves you better than she loves her own blood, and I will tell you, but it must be between us, a thing never to be spoken of and never to be told another. Not once did I see it," and she ceased her caressing of the young girl, who drew back and watched her curiously, for the gaze of the Indian woman was fixed with horror and her form had suddenly stiffened. "Not once did I see it, but many times since, and always the same. Always it was in the night when El Estranjero slept. Always it was when I was wide awake, so I know it was not a dream. Señorita, think you the Great Spirit yet speaks to his children?"

"Oh, yes," said Alice softly, "I am sure He does to many."

"But think you the Great Spirit ever places a picture before them in the air, a picture where men and women move and speak words that can even be heard?"

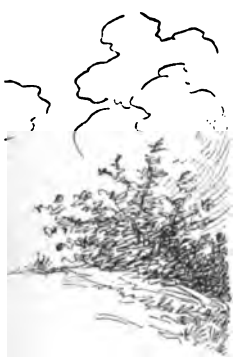
"Perhaps," answered Alice, trembling with eagerness, feeling herself upon the verge of some great mystery.

"Years have I thought upon this as I sit braiding the baskets in the shade or going about my work. Often have I thought to ask El Señor, but always has something held me back. Señorita, he is gentle and good. Never does he say, 'Francesca, do you this,' or 'Francesca, do you that,' but at all times he commands me without words. Señorita, tell me why is it? Your father have I served for five and twenty years, and yet what he wants he must tell me, for I am but a stupid woman and never think upon it, but El Estranjero—" She broke off and sat gazing into the distance.

"But El Estranjero?" Alice reminded her, speaking the name with a lingering upon the syllables as though she loved it.

"Ah, yes," resumed Francesca, "but El Estranjero tells me what he wishes without speaking a word. When he is ill, though I be miles away from him I know it, when he is in danger I see it."

"But he was in no danger that night when you cried so terribly and I and Philip stood by the door looking in. He was lying upon his bed and father



"Hiding behind the trees and rocks there come Indians."—Page 95

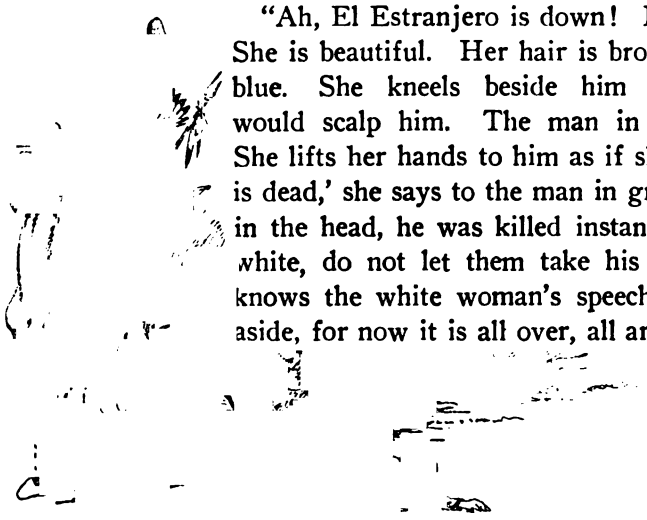
Pah-Utes are there, and with them a white man, and he wears gray clothes, see he is leading them to the wagons!"

"It is not El Estranjero," cried Alice, with a face white as that of a dead woman.

"Non, non," cried the Indian. "Now see, there is El Estranjero, over by the fire. See how he springs up as the Apaches give their war cry. He has slept, as have those in the wagons. See, they drag them forth, women and little children and old men. See the Apaches strike them with the hatchet, they scalp them with the knife. Ah, there is a woman and child. El Estranjero has placed them behind him against a tree. He has taken a hatchet from an Apache, he strikes as the brave comes for him. There, he has cut the Apache's head through and he falls. Ah, and another and another."

Alice listened with every nerve tense, so graphically did the old woman read the picture that in some manner her mind conjured up.

"Ah, El Estranjero is down! Now see the woman. She is beautiful. Her hair is brown and her eyes are blue. She kneels beside him as a tall Pah-Ute would scalp him. The man in gray has come up. She lifts her hands to him as if she would pray. 'He is dead,' she says to the man in gray. 'They shot him in the head, he was killed instantly, and oh, you are white, do not let them take his scalp.' The Indian knows the white woman's speech and puts his knife aside, for now it is all over, all are dead but the white



woman and the little child that is crying and clinging to her. The Indian looks at her. 'You were his squaw?' he asks. 'Oh, my husband, my husband,' she says, and weeps, and, 'Oh, our poor little child,' and she takes it to her bosom. The Indian makes a sign to the man in gray, he turns and goes. The Indian makes the woman get up, he binds her hands, he sets the child on his shoulder, they go, and then it is all dark, I see no more."

Francesca was silent. Her lips, mumbling, gave forth no further sound; she rocked back and forth thus for a few minutes, and while Alice sat staring into nothingness, trying to comprehend the meaning of the strange story she had been told, the old woman softly arose and went away.

CHAPTER XVII

THE COUNCIL

The continued absence of Philip and Juan from the rendezvous had now excited El Estranjero's gravest apprehensions, and he was making preparations to go in search of them when they came into camp. The party was now all together, and so far no serious casualty had occurred. After eating their hasty breakfast, they all stood and sat around about the fire, which in the chill of the early morning in the mountains felt most comfortable, and listened to the tale of the two returned scouts.

It had seemed to El Estranjero that the Indians must have had some other object than running off the herds about the pueblo or they would never have assembled so formidable a war party to journey across the desert from their Nevada home.

He questioned Juan closely concerning what he had heard as he lay behind the boulder, and became convinced that the possession of the rich land of the upper San Gabriel valley with its numerous flocks and herds had tempted them.

Should the Indians return to their own country even with but half the force with which they ventured out, the expedition might be repeated when they had recovered from the disaster. It was the opinion of

El Estranjero that this band must be exterminated to the last man.

He gave this opinion to his comrades. He called to their mind the many raids this same tribe had made upon the whites, the hundreds of sheep, cattle, and horses they had stolen and driven off, the buildings they had burned, and lastly, their attack upon the pueblo, and what horrors might have happened had they not been forewarned.

No peace could be expected, he said, that would be permanent until the Indians had been given a punishment so drastic that it would be remembered for all time.

As El Señor was little given to making long speeches, his views made a deep impression upon his comrades, and when he had voiced his ideas, the little party, standing at attention around the camp fire, raised their right hands to heaven and solemnly swore not to turn back until the enemy was wiped out.

One of the pack horses had fallen lame on the previous day's march, and it was decided to ease his burden to the other horse, and before the injured animal should be unable to travel, to send it back to the pueblo by one of the scouts, who could make faster progress, even riding the lame horse, than he could on foot.

This man was to travel night and day, abandoning the horse should it become unfit for service, and to carry to Mr. Holcomb and the settlers in the valley the news of the proposed Indian raid at Crafton.

This same man was to inform the pueblo of the fact that this chase, being the proverbial "stern chase," was apt to be a long one, and if it was to be effective, they must have provisions, as it was a serious handicap to have to hunt for their meat, and the hunting was attended with great danger, when hostile Indians were so near.

The conference had lasted for several hours, and the transferring of the pack and starting the returning scout upon his way had consumed more time. As all were foot-sore and the pack horse that henceforth must carry a double load needed rest, it was decided that the remainder of the day should be consumed in a cautious hunt for game, and a short cut taken the following morning that would bring the scouts across the trail of the slower-moving part of the Indian band. It had been decided to deal with that portion of the enemy first to prevent any flank attack upon their own party. By Philip's earnest request, Juan omitted all mention of the white captive they had seen, for Philip desired to communicate this to El Estranjero privately and with him plan her rescue.

CHAPTER XVIII

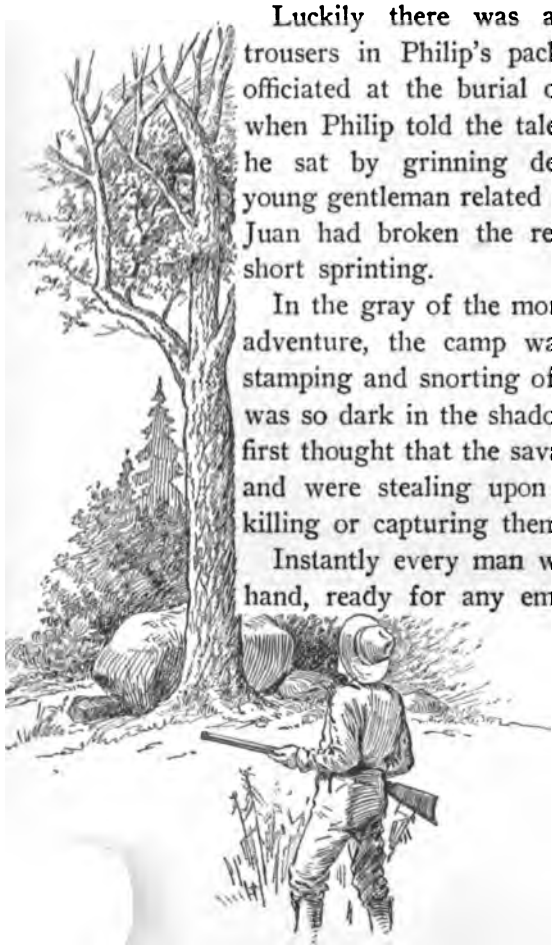
WOODLAND ADVENTURES

Philip and Juan remained in camp, to make up the sleep they had lost in the night tramp. Sometime in the afternoon, Juan was awakened by the sharp squall of a wild-cat, in a tree near by. He softly reached for his gun and crept under the tree harboring the cat. He manœuvered for some minutes trying to get a position that would give him a good view of the animal for a sure shot, but the branches so intercepted his sight that he had passed several times around the tree before he saw an opening for his aim.

Stepping back a pace or two to bring the animal into still better view, his gun struck against an overhanging limb from which dangled a hornet's nest, occupied by a very lively family of the insects, which actively resented this intrusion. After a few of them had made Juan feel their resentment, he forgot all about the wild-cat, and with a yell he started for the stream, followed by a cloud of hornets that stimulated his sprinting. Every jump was accompanied by a yell that made the woods ring, and Philip, roused from his slumber and seeing the nature of the accident, sprang to his feet and made for a place of safety, while Juan, the air around his head black with hornets, ldly dashed into the stream, cast himself face do ard

in it, and wallowed in the black mud, but not before he had plunged through a nest of polecats lying between two great logs, and their displeasure also was vented upon him.

It was fully half an hour before Philip dared to return to camp and move the pack and the horse a few hundred feet farther up the stream. A little later Juan, a sorry spectacle, his head and face roughened like a nutmeg grater from the stings, the pain of which, however, had been assuaged by his plunge into the black mud, again presented himself dripping, odorous, and woe-begone in camp.



Luckily there was a spare shirt and pair of trousers in Philip's pack. Juan donned these, and officiated at the burial of his former garments, and when Philip told the tale at the camp fire that night, he sat by grinning delightedly as that sprightly young gentleman related to the laughing company how Juan had broken the record for high jumping and short sprinting.

In the gray of the morning of the day after Juan's adventure, the camp was awakened by the restless stamping and snorting of the tethered pack horse. It was so dark in the shadow of the trees that it was at first thought that the savages had discovered the camp and were stealing upon them with the intention of killing or capturing them while they were asleep.

Instantly every man was on the alert with rifle in hand, ready for any emergency. All crept behind

"He now made no attempt to conceal himself."—Page 103

to about one-half of that deer, which I very much regret."

"Isn't it possible for you to get a shot?" questioned Estranjero.

"No," replied Philip, "I can't see him yet. It's growing light, however, and I'll soon have my chance."

"A lion?" asked El Estranjero.

"I don't know yet, but I think you've guessed right."

"Now," said Philip, a few minutes later. "Now, I can just barely see him, and if I'm not mistaken it is a mountain lion, and a big one, too."

"Be careful," warned Estranjero. "Those animals are very dangerous when wounded."

The words had hardly been uttered when the crack of Philip's rifle warned Estranjero that his caution had been spoken too late. The lion fell a few feet, caught upon a lower limb of the same tree, and with a snarl bounded straight for Philip, landing fairly on his shoulders, bearing him with terrific force to the ground.

El Estranjero was aiming almost before Philip struck the earth, and a well-directed shot relaxed the beast's hold as he tumbled off in his death agony, Philip springing up unhurt and seeking a safe place from which he could watch the foe that had brought death so near to him.

He was very white about the lips when he reached out a trembling hand to Estranjero.

"See here, old man," he said, in a voice a trifle

unsteady, "you saved my life. I hope I can do something some day to show you I appreciate it."

"I thank God I could do it," said Estranjero, and as he turned away his heart added the words, "Thank God I was here to save you for her."

CHAPTER XIX

THE FIGHT AT CRAFTON

The rare October day had closed with a sunset gorgeous with color. Alice leaned over the gate that opened into the meadow, with eyes fixed upon the distant mountains. Against the purple where the range melted to the valley, she imagined she saw another tint. She watched it; yes it was dust. Some one was riding fast toward the pueblo.

Her father strolled toward her, smoking his evening pipe, and the two idly watched the approaching rider. It was a quarter of an hour after they first sighted him before it became apparent that he had now struck off from the main road and was riding straight for the place where they stood.

Alice's prophetic heart gave warning that this man was the bearer of tidings. What were they? Did he come to tell of the death of Philip? Did he come with news of El Estranjero? Was it some one whom Manuel and Marco had met and sent with news?

All these questions surged through her mind as she stood waiting. Her father had passed through the gate and was striding to meet the rider, who had stopped and dismounted, and with eager gestures was imparting something, his horse standing with rein dropped over his neck, panting by his side. A few words, and then the stranger took his horse's rein,

and walking by Holcomb's side, approached the gate, eagerly talking as he came and as eagerly heard.

When he came near, Alice recognized him as one of the members of the expedition that had now been gone for many days. It was the man El Estranjero had sent back with the lame pack animal. He had left it safe with a cattleman upon the mountain, borrowed a swift horse of him, and warning the settlers as he passed of the impending raid upon Crafton, had now arrived at his journey's end. No time must be lost if the Indians were to be frustrated, and Holcomb bade good-bye to his daughter and rode posthaste to assemble the cowboys.

The Indians that had been sent to the valley below had gone to the foot of the trail at Cajon Pass, and turning to the east, skirted the foot of the mountains to Highlands, and thence to Crafton. Rounding up a herd of twenty-five steers before the settlers had discovered their raid, they started to return to the mountain by the trail, the same which to-day is a wide and beautiful road with an easy grade, leading to Bear Valley.

They had reached the foot of the trail, and just as the first streak of dawn appeared in the sky were heading the cattle up the mountain. For several minutes the cattle had shown signs of uneasiness. Now they stopped, snorted, threw up their heads, and refused to budge another inch.

Supposing they were frightened by a wild animal, the Indians behind them swung their arms and

yelled to them, determined to force them past the place quickly. Suddenly from the brush at the side of the trail there rang out the sharp report of a score of rifles, and with it the terrifying yell of as many mounted cowboys, Holcomb riding at their head. With a swirl and a rush the steers turned and were off down the mountain in a stampede that brushed aside or trampled underfoot the savages, and were soon out of sight in the direction of their pasture at Crafton.

Before the Indians could recover, the cowboys were upon them, pursuing them hither and thither as they sought shelter in the brush, exterminating every one, not even sparing the wounded.

This fighting of the Indians was no child's play, and no false sentimentality was shown on the part of the cowboys, a class not much given to sentimentality at any time.

They did, however, bury the dead across the river at a place known to this day as "Crafton Retreat;" but the burial was not sentiment, either, and there were few of the whites who participated in that fight who did not bear away from the field some weapon or other memento, and keep it among their treasures and bequeath it to their descendants.

When the burial was over, Holcomb rode again to his home. He knew Alice would be filled with anxiety for his safety, and he himself was anxious for further news from El Estranjero's party.

CHAPTER XX

A TALE OF THE FRONTIER

It was again evening and Holcomb smoked his pipe, sitting upon his favorite seat on the veranda. Alice was beside him in a low chair, her cheeks flushed with eager interest, her shining eyes upon her father's face.

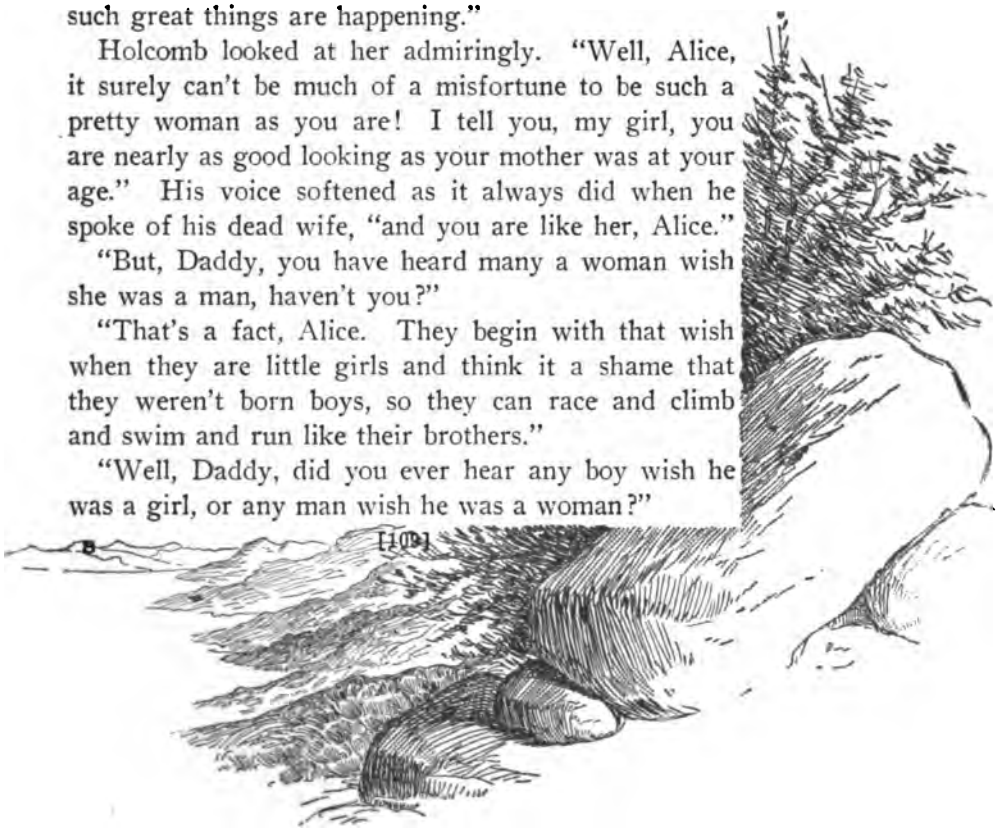
"Oh, Daddy," she said, squeezing one of his hands in both of hers, "I wish I were a man like Philip, then I could ride with you and hunt and fight. Daddy, it's a misfortune to be a woman and sit at home while such great things are happening."

Holcomb looked at her admiringly. "Well, Alice, it surely can't be much of a misfortune to be such a pretty woman as you are! I tell you, my girl, you are nearly as good looking as your mother was at your age." His voice softened as it always did when he spoke of his dead wife, "and you are like her, Alice."

"But, Daddy, you have heard many a woman wish she was a man, haven't you?"

"That's a fact, Alice. They begin with that wish when they are little girls and think it a shame that they weren't born boys, so they can race and climb and swim and run like their brothers."

"Well, Daddy, did you ever hear any boy wish he was a girl, or any man wish he was a woman?"



"Can't say that I ever did, daughter. No, I know that I never did."

"Talk, Daddy, tell me some more about the fight."

"But I have told it to you, Alice, once this morning, when we were at breakfast, and again this evening."

"You're sure you haven't left out anything?"

"Not a thing."

"Then, Daddy, you tell me the story I used to like when I was a little girl, the story about the buffaloes."

"What a child you are, for a grown woman, Alice."

"I wish I were a child," said Alice, as her mind reverted to her secret love and disappointment. "I wish I were a freckled-faced, long-legged girl again, Daddy. Pretend I am now, and tell me my story."

She slipped one of his sturdy arms about her and cuddled close to him like a child, her golden head upon his breast. Sitting thus, while he puffed occasionally at his pipe, Holcomb told her this story.

"I was traveling through New Mexico, nearly on the line of what was afterward called 'The Santa Fe Trail,' in the region sometimes called 'the buffalo hunt,' owing to the numerous herds of bison that annually roamed these plains when the deep snows of the north would drive them to a milder climate, where it was easier for them to get at the grass.

"By those acquainted with the habits of the buffalo, it is well known that they often winter in regions covered with snow, even to the depth of several feet, not seeming to feel the cold, finding their food by pawing away the snow to uncover the dried grass beneath.

"This is not difficult for these hardy animals when the snow falls dry and light during dry winters or winters of continuous cold weather, but when there is a season of alternate heat and cold, and the snow alternately melts and freezes, there is formed a glaze of ice over the surface of the ground, or a crust of snow so thick and hard as to be almost impenetrable, and then the buffalo often wears his hoof to the very quick, digging for grass, leaving a trail of blood on the snow as he travels from point to point.

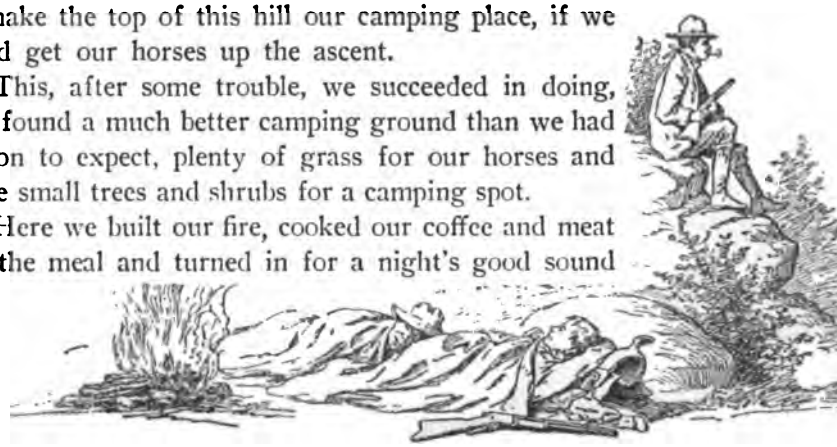
"In such seasons the herds would roam about in countless thousands and almost denude the plains of their rich grasses, so when they returned north in the spring they left a country barren and uninviting.

"It was after one of these winters of alternate freezing and thawing that John Marshall and I were traveling west, as I have said. We had noticed many large bunches of buffalo on every side, when our journey brought us to a very abrupt rise of ground.

"This butte, or hill, towered up sheer out of the plain, and was so steep that it was somewhat difficult to scale it, but after some reconnoitering we determined to make the top of this hill our camping place, if we could get our horses up the ascent.

"This, after some trouble, we succeeded in doing, and found a much better camping ground than we had reason to expect, plenty of grass for our horses and some small trees and shrubs for a camping spot.

"Here we built our fire, cooked our coffee and meat for the meal and turned in for a night's good sound

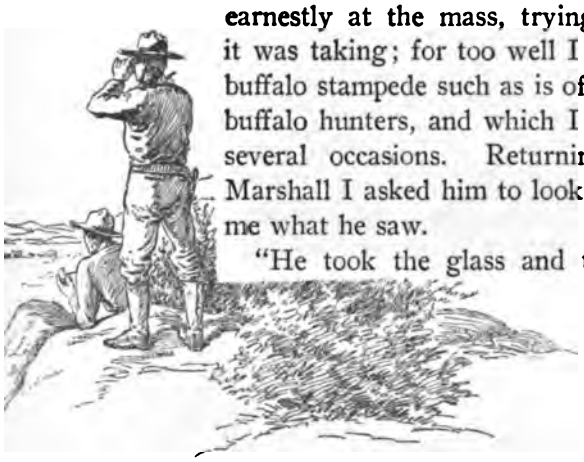


sleep. Being both young and healthy we slept so soundly that time was annihilated and the sun was shining when we opened our eyes and realized that it was morning. We prepared and ate our breakfast and, while smoking an after-breakfast pipe, sat looking lazily across the plain below, over which we could see for a long distance on every side.

"Suddenly young Marshall went to his camp outfit and taking out a field glass gazed long and earnestly, then handing it to me, asked me to look in a westerly direction.

" 'I can see,' said he, 'two prairie schooners, three or four men and some women and children who are just getting under way for their western journey. For the life of me I cannot understand how they dare camp out in the open, unprotected from these herds of wild buffaloes.'

"I took the glass and could easily see the camp with all of its outfit, and was about to return the glass when I was attracted by a moving cloud far away to the north, and could just discern a moving mass under this cloud which proved to be dust. I gazed long and earnestly at the mass, trying to note the direction it was taking; for too well I knew that it was a wild buffalo stampede such as is often mentioned by the old buffalo hunters, and which I had before witnessed on several occasions. Returning the glass to young Marshall I asked him to look in that direction and tell me what he saw.



"He took the glass and then almost immediately

exclaimed, 'they are buffaloes in thousands, bearing down directly on that camp. It will be annihilated.'

" 'Can we help them,' I asked.

" 'No,' was his reply, 'the buffaloes will be upon them before we could get half way there, unless they swerve to one side and leave the camp unmolested, which God grant may be the case.'

"From this time on we watched the swiftly moving mass and prayed that they would go to one side of the camp apparently doomed to awful destruction. Up to this time the campers seemingly had not discovered their danger. This was strange, for at our distance we could hear the awful thundering of the hoofs of the buffaloes and the ominous sound already struck a chill to our hearts that seemed like that of death.

"Again taking the glass, young Marshall discerned that the campers had seen their peril and were now hurrying desperately to get out of the track of that dreadful mass.

" 'Too late, too late,' he cried, 'God help them, no one else can!' and throwing himself upon the ground he cried as though his heart would break.

"I took the glass just in time to see two or three of the leading buffalo bulls darting through the camp between the wagons, and in an instant two or three more, then a bunch knocked down a woman and ran over a child, then a wagon was slewed around and overturned, then thousands of them poured over and through the camp until nothing remained in sight

but one great turbulent, rushing, relentless tide, the impulse of which carried death and destruction and left no sign or trace.

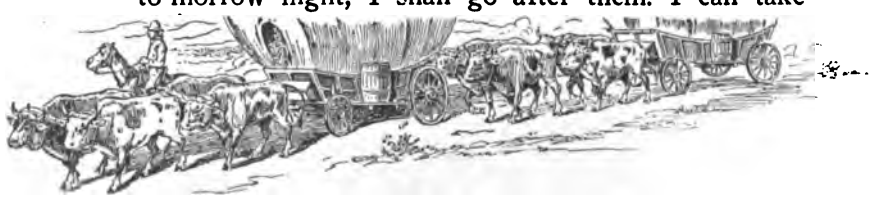
"Every human being, animal, wagon, all of the clothing, cooking utensils and camp equipment of every nature and description had disappeared so effectually that not a bone, rag, stick, or piece of material could be seen in any direction.

"After this vast herd had passed, we saddled our horses and proceeded upon our journey across the plain, passing over the ground where the camp had been, but there remained only absolute desolation. Now when I hear any one express a fear that the buffalo will become extinct, it calls to my mind that scene, and banishes from my thoughts any desire to perpetuate that species of animal."

Holcomb knocked the ashes from his pipe and arose. Alice stood beside him still clinging to his arm.

"That's a good story, Daddy, and you told it just as you used to." She was silent a moment as they stood with arms entwined looking out into the night. Finally she said, half timidly, "Daddy, do you think everything is right with Philip and El Estranjero? Why do they not come back? They intended to scout only, did they not, to find out what direction the savages had gone, and how many there were? Don't you think they ought to be back by this time?"

"You're anxious about Philip? Well, my little girl, so am I. If I don't hear from them before this time to-morrow night, I shall go after them. I can take



Jose, and Gardiner, the man who has returned with the pack horse, will go with us."

"Oh, Daddy, let me go too, I would love to go, and I do hate staying here alone and thinking and worrying."

"No, Alice, it is not to be thought of," replied Holcomb.

Alice came to a swift decision. She had always been a headstrong child, and she was now a headstrong woman, and as perfectly fearless as Philip or Juan. She would say no more about going, but would wait till her father was well on his way, and then she would come up with him when he had gone too far either to come back or send her back alone. With this determination in her mind, she kissed her father good night and went to her chamber, where upon her white bed she tossed for half the night, thinking of El Estranjero and praying for his safety.

CHAPTER XXI

A DESERT TRAGEDY

While these events were transpiring, Manuel and Marco with their two horses laden with the empty water casks, had made their way to the little cienega about a mile from the point where the Pah-Ute trail led across the desert to Nevada.

The two Indians had been on many a prospecting trip in this waste with their master, and knew every landmark as well as did the Pah-Utes themselves. They had rested for a few hours at a point where they could see every object for miles desertward, and where also they could command a view of the point from which their friends would come, although, such good time had they made in their trip, they knew it was more than forty-eight hours too early to expect even the band of Indians who were to come over the mountains.

As they lay there Manuel saw afar upon the desert a moving black speck. It came nearer and nearer, both Indians watching with the greatest interest. Soon it resolved itself into the shape of a burro, and his master, if he had any, must be walking far behind, for they could not see him. As the burro came nearer, they saw that he was laden with one large water cask and two small ones, and was trailing a tie-rope behind him.

The Mojave Desert

see the track they followed, camping at last when they could no longer safely trail, and again upon the way with the first daylight of the next morning, for they knew that it was a case of life and death, which might be decided adversely for one hour's delay.

The burro, while lank with starvation, had nevertheless been able to reach the cienega, and they had great hopes of being able to find the camp from which it had strayed in time to save the lives of those who might have been its owners.

They knew well that a burro can exist almost as long as a camel without a drop of water, so that its presence and condition were no index of how long it might have endured thirst before finding water.

They hurried along as fast as was possible in the cool of the day, and they hoped to find the camp safe at the first water-hole. Although it was late October, the heat upon the desert was so intense that they were obliged to halt in the middle of the day to rest and feed the horse and refresh themselves.

They hung a blanket across two cactus bushes and made a partial shade for themselves and the horse, and scraping away the hot surface, lay down upon the ground and slept for a couple of hours.

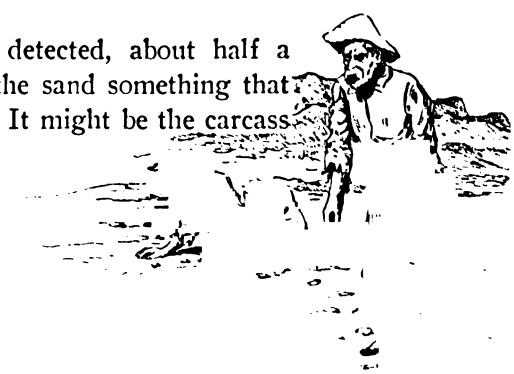
Much revived, they again took up the trail and arrived at the first water-hole late in the afternoon. There they made the discovery that the burro had quenched his thirst at the spring, and had been close to it for some time, as the sand was much trampled here, and they found where he had lain.

The failure to find any other track but that of the burro was a disappointment to the two Indians, but it inspired them to push on. It was ten o'clock at night when they reached the second water-hole, and they waited for the moon to rise, to take up the trail. The wind blew cool, and it was as light as day when the moon finally arose, and by its light the Indians saw that here the burro had caught the dragging rope upon a bush, and by making a wide circuit around the water-hole they saw that he had dragged the shrub round and round the water-hole, evidently thinking he was staked, but when he had at last freed himself from it, had made a bee line for the next spring. Around the trampled circle which he had made were scattered cans of vegetables and other provender which the burro had shaken from his pack and which were spoiled by the action of the sun.

Still the two Indians could discover no tracks of a man, and now, being convinced that the owners of the burro had lost their stock of food as well as their supply of water by the straying of the animal, they knew their case was desperate, but the moonlight was too uncertain for good trailing, and so they waited for morning to take up the track.

As soon as it was light enough to follow they struck out, finding the trail of the animal and following it for about five miles.

Here Manuel's sharp eyes detected, about half a mile to the right, lying upon the sand something that was not a dried cactus shrub. It might be the carcass



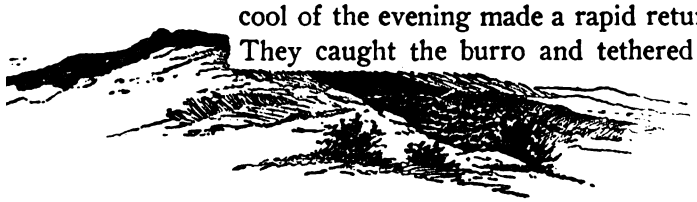
of some dead animal, but the two trailers decided to investigate.

It was the body of a man, who had been dead for some days. By his side was an empty tin can with which he had attempted to dig a hole in the sand to escape from the burning sun. Following his zig-zag trail a mile or two they came upon the body of another. There was now little hope of finding any one else, but there might still be some poor fellow crazed with thirst and hunger, lying under some rock or shrub, and so the patient Indians took up the trail of the two men. They found that one had apparently carried the other, sitting down frequently to rest. Then he had half-dragged him, the weaker stumbling along a few rods, then falling, then up again and on for a few feet, then down and crawling along on his hands and knees.

The stronger had then gone on alone, and the weaker with his bare hands had dug deep into the sand, wearing his fingers to the bone in the agonized search for water, before he died the terrible death the treacherous desert has in store for the wanderer.

Satisfied now that the strangers they had come to help were all beyond the reach of succor, the Indians turned back and, moving as swiftly as possible, by noon were again at the second water-hole.

Resting here for a couple of hours they reached the first water-hole late in the afternoon, and in the cool of the evening made a rapid return to the cienega. They caught the burro and tethered it in a secluded



place unlikely to be discovered by any prowling savage, and hiding their own wearied horse in the same manner, they bedded themselves in the brush as comfortably as though they were denizens of the wild.

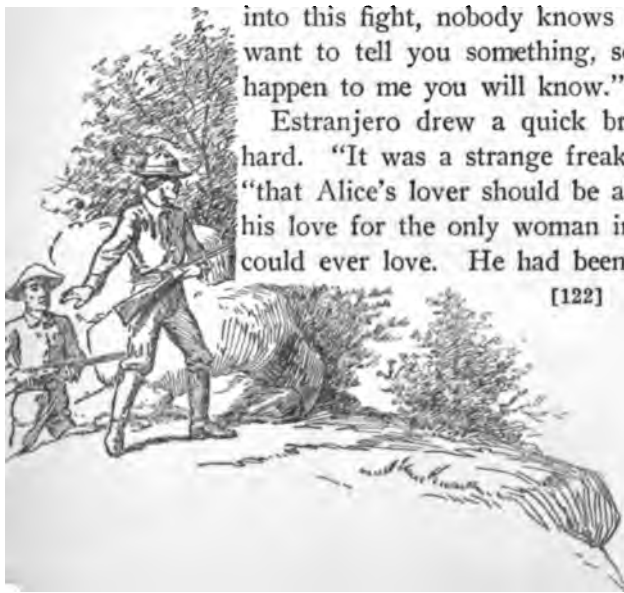
CHAPTER XXII

IN THE PASS

Philip and El Estranjero were scouting together. The little party had followed the retreat of the most slowly moving and largest of the savage bands in the direction of Cajon Pass, and it was here that the woodsmen, having disposed their little force to the best advantage, expected to ambush them and thus prevent their joining the chief, who with the body of ten warriors was to wait at the Mojave for the return of his raiders with the beef-steers.

They were resting after a hard climb over rocks and fallen trees, for it was necessary to take the shortest route to the Pass, if they would intercept the band, who must go by the easier way because of their wounded.

"El Estranjero," said Philip, "come sit here for a moment, I have something to tell you. We are going into this fight, nobody knows who may be killed. I want to tell you something, so that should anything happen to me you will know."



Estranjero drew a quick breath and set his teeth hard. "It was a strange freak of Fate," he thought, "that Alice's lover should be about to confess to him his love for the only woman in the world he himself could ever love. He had been obliged to bear many

hard things of late, but this surely was the hardest. Yet what could he do, Philip was his friend, and friendship too, has its claims."

"Philip," he said, looking the young man bravely in the eyes, "you will come out of this unharmed. I will see to it that any danger must first pass me to reach you."

"I am not afraid," rejoined Philip. "Don't think for a minute that I need any such protection. But accidents are likely to happen, and a woman's safety and happiness depends upon me now."

El Estranjero gave him a surprised glance.

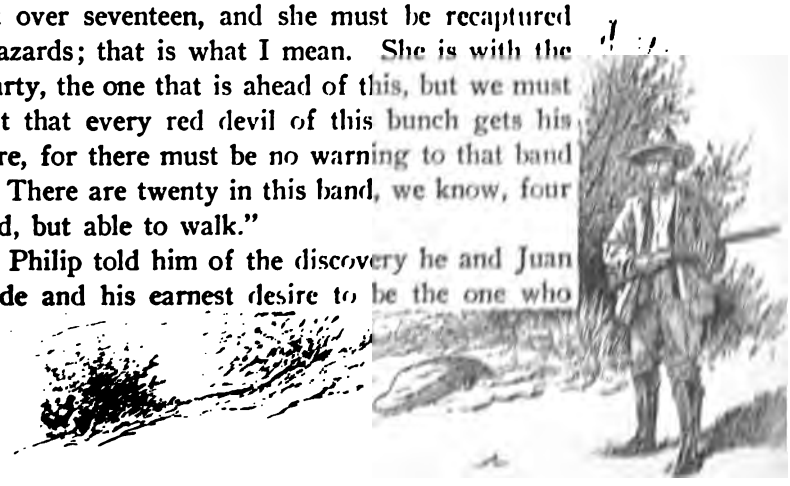
"Her safety and happiness, Philip? She is safe with her father, I have no doubt, but her happiness, well, yes, maybe her happiness."

It was Philip's turn to look surprised. "I don't know whom you have in mind; of course—" he began.

"Was it not Alice of whom you spoke?" queried El Estranjero.

"Listen," said Philip. "There is a white woman, a prisoner, among those Indians down there, a young girl not over seventeen, and she must be recaptured at all hazards; that is what I mean. She is with the other party, the one that is ahead of this, but we must see to it that every red devil of this bunch gets his dose here, for there must be no warning to that band ahead. There are twenty in this band, we know, four wounded, but able to walk."

Then Philip told him of the discovery he and Juan had made and his earnest desire to be the one who



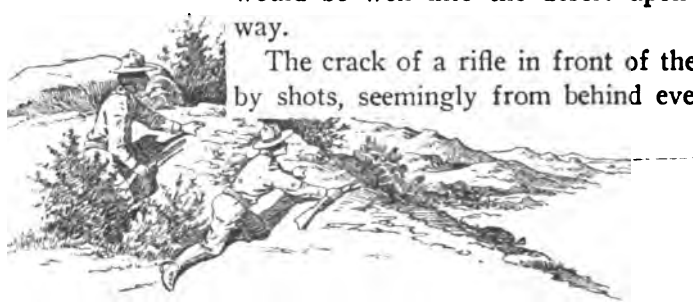
should rescue the captive white girl, whose beauty had haunted him every hour since.

"Ah," breathed Estranjero, with a sigh of relief, when he had finished. "Now I understand you. Here comes Juan with news."

The Indian came swiftly to the spot where they lay. "El Señor," he said, "they are three miles below us, and traveling slowly. They will go through the Pass, traveling to the northwest upon the desert side, and keeping along the hills to be near water."

"No, Juan," said El Señor, grimly. "They will not travel along the desert side of the hills for we must exterminate them, every one, before the sun is two hours higher. Get you back, Juan, and carry this order to the others. Let the enemy well into the Pass, then when you hear me fire, attack and give no quarter."

Philip and El Estranjero now posted themselves one on either side of the Pass, within good range of the trail, and lay silently watching. Unsuspicious of danger, the Indians at last made their appearance. As they had come so far they evidently believed that after the encounter in which their companions received the wounds, the whites, finding so large a band of the enemy in front of them, had returned to the valley for reinforcements, and before these could arrive they would be well into the desert upon their homeward way.



The crack of a rifle in front of them was answered by shots, seemingly from behind every rock, and the

Indians broke for cover. They were hotly pursued, and a running fight, lasting for nearly an hour, took place. Two of the white men were wounded, but neither dangerously, and they were sent back to the camp at Spring Rock while the others, their numbers now reduced to seven, pressed on. With the advantage of ground and preparation, they were able to hunt every Indian from his covert, and not till the full count of twenty was made did they desist, knowing there was not one stray Indian left to carry the news to the band in advance.

It was a fight without mercy, but these savages merited little pity from them, and as even a wounded brave can be a dangerous foe, there was one scout who had a hard enough heart to kill the wounded Indians, holding that it was more merciful to end their sufferings than to leave them to the slow torture of pain and thirst in the wilderness, or to recover to continue their work of pillage and murder.

As El Estranjero had heard no news from the valley, and was uncertain what had been the outcome of the raid of the Indian band at Crafton, it was decided to push on with the utmost speed to the cienega where they had appointed to meet Marco and Manuel. This would give them two pack horses with which to follow the Indians, and two more clever scouts, trailers and good shots, to take part in the campaign.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE PURSUIT

This little company now pressed rapidly onward, killing by the way venison for their use, and traveling in couples as they had since the beginning, save that now two guarded the pack horse, two traveled in the van and two in the rear, while Juan scouted far ahead like a trained hound, returning to El Estranjero and Philip, who were in the lead, when he had anything to impart to them.

Crossing the mountains, they skirted the range on the desert side, Juan often near enough to the chief's band to hear their talk about their camp fire. More than once Philip lay with him in the shelter of a log or boulder and feasted his eyes upon the beauty of the white captive. His thoughts were with her constantly. The pathos of her position, the tragedy that he knew must soon touch her in some of its phases, her own tender affection for the chief, to whom she always spoke as father, and the respect with which he treated her, made the elements of a romance that his youthful fancy constructed about her. How came she to be among them? What was her story?

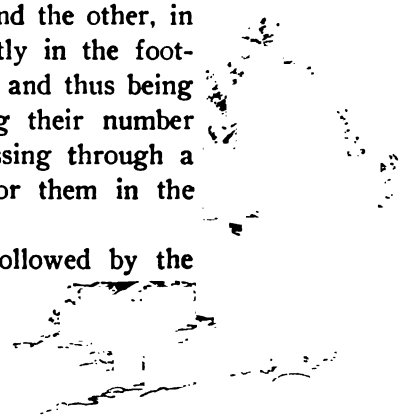
The Indians felt such security that they kept no guard about their fire, but for several days there was no opportunity to make the attack without injuring the girl. By this time they were within a few miles

of the rendezvous agreed upon between the party and Manuel and Marco. Estranjero decided that to use this favorable opportunity to attack the savages would make them suspicious and travel with more caution. Fearing that the Indians might discover they were pursued, or that the horse and casks and perhaps Manuel and Marco also might fall into their hands if they learned there were whites in the vicinity, they, therefore, allowed the hostiles to approach their home trail, while they themselves halted and sent Juan forward to locate Manuel and Marco, which he did without difficulty and brought them into camp, their horse and the burro laden with freshly-filled water casks, and both themselves and the animals refreshed and ready for travel.

The hostiles also halted upon the edge of the desert and traveled with more caution, keeping well under cover, but Juan had no difficulty in following their movements.

Had he been following Blackfeet, Seminoles, or Wyandottes, or any of the savages east of the Rockies, he would have had more trouble in deciphering the signs. These Indians travel one behind the other, in "Indian file," placing their feet exactly in the foot-prints of the marcher ahead of them, and thus being able to deceive the enemy regarding their number as well as to preserve silence in passing through a country where danger might lurk for them in the tangle of thick woods and underbrush.

This method of travel was not followed by the



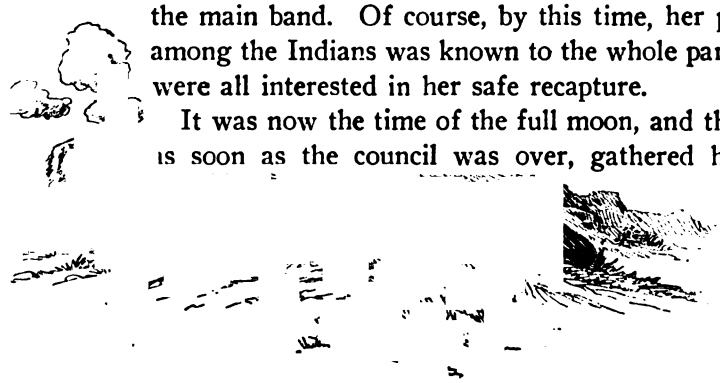
Indians of the Rocky Mountain and desert region, because of the nature of the country, much of which is treeless and their movements could in this country be followed by an enemy from some point of vantage.

They chose to separate, each man for himself, always keeping in touch, and camping together at night. The chief seemed filled with anxiety concerning the cattle raiders. The night of the day that they reached the point where the home trail began, there was another council, Juan, skulking in the bushes, being an interested listener.

It was decided that the chief with the girl and two chosen braves, should travel as fast as possible to the Mojave. That the remaining seven or eight warriors should hunt there and make jerky to bring forward in case the raiding band was unsuccessful, and that after four days should meet the advance party at the rendezvous. After leaving the hills, it would, of course, be impossible to subsist, but the Indians had gathered acorns and made it into bread, and they had some venison that had been slaughtered on the way. The little party with the girl was amply provisioned, as the hunters were in position to replenish their pouches.

Philip and Estranjero congratulated themselves that now at last the girl was about to be separated from the main band. Of course, by this time, her presence among the Indians was known to the whole party, who were all interested in her safe recapture.

It was now the time of the full moon, and the chief, as soon as the council was over, gathered his little



party together and started away across the desert. From their places of concealment El Estranjero and Philip watched them go, and Philip with a sinking heart wondered if by any chance their plans would fail and the girl be lost to him.

He said in his heart "lost to me" because day by day he had felt his heart warm to her, and his soul go out to her.

It was not alone her beauty and her helplessness, but her unconscious dignity, her uncomplaining endurance of hardship, her feminine delicacy that showed itself even amid the rudeness of her surroundings and the savagery of her companions. He felt that he could follow her through the whole world if he could but reclaim her at last.

With a reticence unusual to him, he did not communicate these thoughts to El Estranjero, who had no inkling of their nature, and supposed that Philip's interest in the captive was of the same chivalrous kind that he himself felt, and that was felt by every man in the company.

The scouts had determined to attack the hunting band early in the morning, but long before it was light Philip, lying by the side of El Estranjero, awakened him with a touch, and asked him to let him and Manuel follow the chief and his comrades, as they could well be spared in the forthcoming fight.

He was so earnest in his plea that El Estranjero consented, and so they stole out of camp and were lost to view behind the sand hills before dawn.

A savage hunter, stealing early to the side of a little streamlet, found in the soft ooze the track of a horse, and the sudden scattering of the band upon his return to their camp, informed the watchful Juan that the presence of the whites was discovered.

The projected attack thus became a still hunt, and soon the sharp crack of a woodsman's rifle showed that a lurking enemy had been found. For many hours there was now a desultory battle, but the long range rifles of the scouts proved too much for the hostiles, and five of them were killed outright, and one so severely wounded that he died a few minutes after being discovered. A single brave alone escaped to tell the Pah-Utes, long after, in their far-away Nevada homes, the story of how his brothers had perished. This Indian was driven back into the mountains, and though he was diligently searched for, he got safely away unwounded.

CHAPTER XXIV

NAWONA

The little band of Pah-Utes headed by the chief, traveled until the moon went down, and then camped behind a butte at the water-hole where Manuel and Marco had so recently trailed the burro. The girl and the chieftain had rested a little apart from the others.

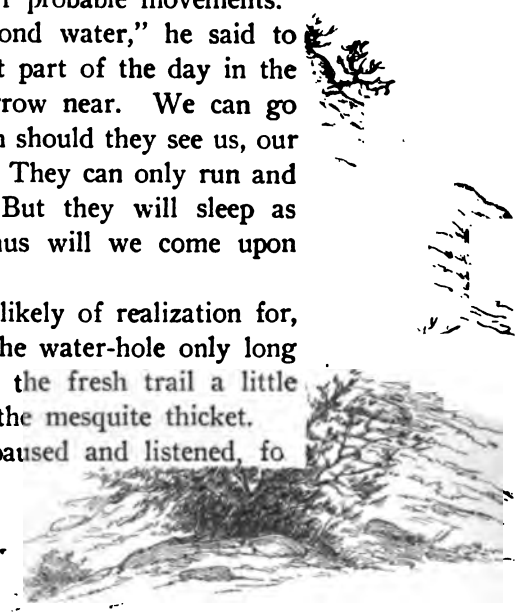
In the morning, before it was light enough to see the tracks about the well and that they were recent, they set out, traveling with less haste than before.

Manuel and Philip had made good time, but the little party was out of sight before they came to the place where they had rested. From the direction they had taken, Manuel knew their probable movements.

"They'll make for the second water," he said to Philip, "and will pass the hot part of the day in the shade of the mesquite that grow near. We can go forward without fear, for even should they see us, our rifles are too good for them. They can only run and our bullets can go faster. But they will sleep as though it were night and thus will we come upon them."

Manuel's prophecy seemed likely of realization for, as he and Philip stopped at the water-hole only long enough to fill their canteens, the fresh trail a little after noon led them toward the mesquite thicket.

As they approached they paused and listened, fo



from the clump came the sound of a fierce struggle with panting, breathing, and now and then a guttural sound. Mingled with this was the sound of a woman's wild weeping.

Both broke into a run, their feet making little noise upon the soft sand, as they sped toward the bushes. The sound of the struggle had now ceased, and they could hear a curious gurgling noise, then a wild shriek and another and another lent wings to their feet.

The sight that they saw in the shadow of that thicket made them pause an instant in horror-stricken contemplation. Upon the ground, his features composed as in the peace of sleep, lay the chief, stone dead, a great gash upon his naked breast just over the heart showing how he had died. A dozen feet away lay another Indian, and the curious gurgling was the death rattle in his throat. He was bleeding from a dozen wounds, and his hand still clasping his hunting knife showed that he had made a desperate resistance.

The girl was cowering against a rock in the grasp of the only living member of the hostile braves. His eyes were fixed upon her with a savage leer as he tried to drag her from the boulder, and, with her eyes closed to shut out the sight of his face and the awful scene beyond, the white captive was shrieking in impotent terror.

Before the savage could turn, Philip had struck him to the ground with a stunning blow from his clubbed rifle, and laid the now fainting girl tenderly upon the sand. He saw now that the buck he had felled was

mortally wounded by a knife-thrust in his side, and while Philip bathed the face of the girl, holding his canteen to her lips, the wounded savage opened his eyes, gasped, and died at Manuel's feet.

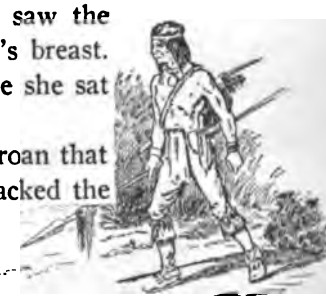
Here they were alone with an awful tragedy. It was several minutes before Philip's ministrations brought the girl to her senses, and it was some time longer before her terror and grief at the loss of the only protector she had ever known enabled her to tell her rescuers what had happened.

The captive, who called herself Nawona, could speak the patois of the California Indians, having learned it from a squaw who had married a Pah-Ute buck. As Philip could speak this tongue he was able to converse freely with the girl and ask her many questions.

He found that they had traveled thus far without anything unusual happening, but that in the morning she had noticed that the two bucks were sullen, and had apparently quarreled about something.

Their conduct, however, did not alarm her, and she lay down by her father's side to rest in the shelter of the thicket, and being very weary with the morning's march, both soon fell asleep.

She was awakened by a deep groan, and saw the murderous knife withdrawn from her father's breast. He died without a word or a struggle, while she sat with horrified eyes looking at him.



The other brave was also aroused by the groan that awakened her, and, springing to his feet, attacked the

murderer, only to fall, bleeding and dying, after an awful struggle. He had given a good account of himself in the fight, however, and had struck a deathblow at the would-be ravisher.

Very gently Philip talked to the grief-stricken girl, as he sat with her by the dead chief's side.

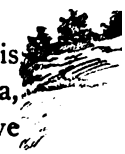
"He was good and kind to me," moaned Nawona, "and was my father."

"But you are white," said Philip.

"But he was the only father I have ever known."

"What is that upon his necklace?" said Philip, pointing to a sort of golden disk that hung suspended from the dead man's neck by a thong of deer hide.

"I do not know, he has worn it for many years."



"Here," said Philip, severing the thong with his hunting knife and handing the trinket to Nawona, "Keep this as a memento of him, for we must leave him here in the desert and take you with us to the home of your people, where you will be well taken care of and happy."

Nawona turned the trinket in her hand, weeping.

"See," she said, "it has rain drops caught in it. Oh, many a time when I was but a little girl I have sat upon my father's knee and watched the sun sparkling upon them."

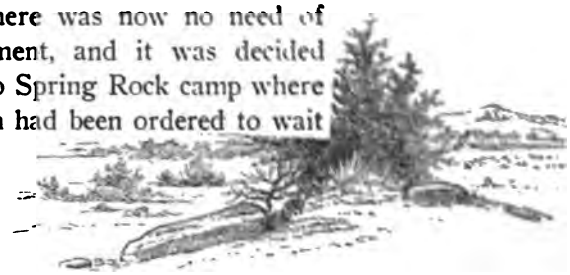
Philip examined the disk curiously. He would have thought it a locket, but nowhere was there evidence of a hinge joining its parts, or a spring to separate them. It was oval in shape, and on one side an old English

G was outlined in small diamonds, with a large and beautiful stone near the center of the letter.

"Where can he have found that?" said Philip, with a secret thought that maybe it had been the spoil of some savage murder. "Keep it carefully, Nawona, some day we may find its rightful owner."

With their hunting knives, Philip and Manuel scraped a shallow grave in the sand in which they laid the body of the dead chieftain. After filling in the grave, they cut mesquite bushes and piled them upon it, weighting them down with small boulders that they gathered here and there out of the waste, providing thus against making the dead man a feast for the coyotes and the buzzards, to which they left the bodies of the two dead braves. Then with the girl between them, they set out upon their return to the first water-hole, where they met El Estranjero and the others, and thence made a quick journey to the hills that skirted the edge of the great waste.

As all the band was now accounted for but the ten Indians that had been sent after the cattle, and as the settlers had been duly apprised of the raid, with every chance of frustrating it, there was now no need of attempting further punishment, and it was decided to make a leisurely return to Spring Rock camp where the two wounded woodsmen had been ordered to wait for the party.

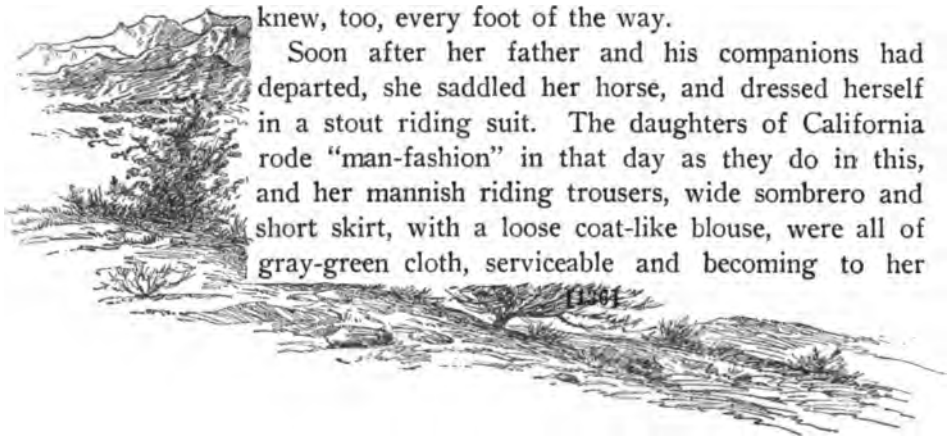


CHAPTER XXV

THE RUNAWAY

No news had come to the house with the patio of the fate of the scouts in the mountains and, after a long talk with Gardiner, Holcomb determined that he would take Jose, the Mestizo, and with Gardiner would seek the cowboy camp on Mill Creek, where a wide lookout for further raiding parties was maintained, and recruiting from them a sufficient force to succor El Estranjero and the rest, would take the trail for the woods.

He did not wait for the elapse of the time he had set as the limit for the news to come, but, early the next day, made ready to depart. Alice assisted him with suspicious alacrity, and as she filled his saddle-bags with bread, bacon, and jerky, she surreptitiously made ready another pouch with the same provender which she secreted in her own bedroom. She knew that Mill Creek was the first objective point, and she knew, too, every foot of the way.



Soon after her father and his companions had departed, she saddled her horse, and dressed herself in a stout riding suit. The daughters of California rode "man-fashion" in that day as they do in this, and her mannish riding trousers, wide sombrero and short skirt, with a loose coat-like blouse, were all of gray-green cloth, serviceable and becoming to her

blonde beauty. Her golden hair was tightly secured under the crown of her hat, her strong high-topped calf-skin boots protected her limbs from the brush, and thick leather gloves covered her hands.

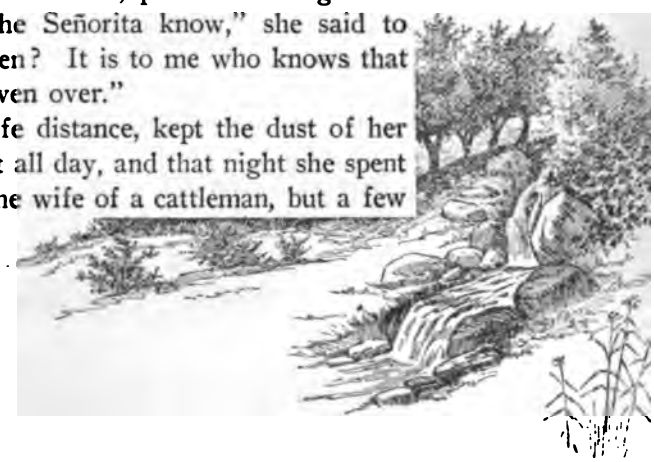
She surveyed herself in the mirror with mischievous delight as she stood equipped for her escapade.

"Now let me see, Daddy," she said, as if addressing her father, "I'll want a blanket, won't I? Well, here goes," and she took a thick gray blanket from the closet, made it into a neat tight roll and tied it firmly. "And, of course, Daddy, I'll take my gun," and she slipped a pearl-handled revolver into her belt. "Now I am ready," and kissing her hand to the reflection in the glass, she went out, fastened the blanket at the back of her saddle, strapped the knapsack on it also, then sought Francesca.

The old woman was accustomed to having her mistress make long rides to visit her friends and relatives when her father was from home, and she made no remark as Alice told her that she was going away to stay until her father's return, and gave her certain household directions, which Francesca, according to her usual custom, heard politely, and also according to her usual custom, proceeded to ignore.

"For what does the Señorita know," she said to herself, "of the kitchen? It is to me who knows that the doing must be given over."

Alice, from her safe distance, kept the dust of her father's party in sight all day, and that night she spent with an old friend, the wife of a cattleman, but a few

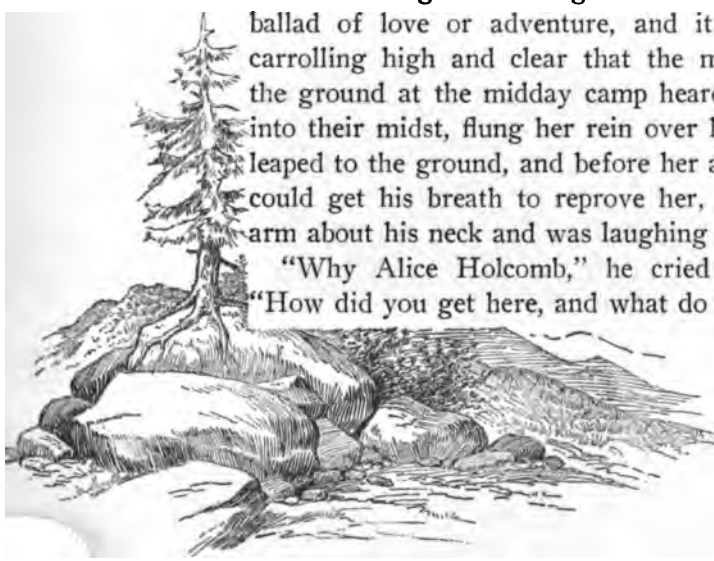


miles from where Holcomb had gone into camp with the cowboys on Mill Creek, near the old Thurman camp, not far from the trail that in these days is still traveled to Bear Valley.

Bright and early the next morning, accompanied by half a dozen cowboys, Holcomb started toward Bear Valley, to join the scouts, who, when Gardiner left them, had been encamped at Rock Springs. Over the picturesque trail past Seven Oaks and Mountain Home they went, the trail following a small clear brooklet, which it crossed again and again as it hugged one side or the other of the ravine. At midday they halted at Mountain Home, and rested in the shade while their unsaddled horses grazed near by.

All that fair morning, under the flickering shadow of the leaves, out where the sun shone bright and hot, splashing through the clear streamlet, Alice trailed the party. Many times she stopped to watch some wild creature of the wood scurry up the mountain side, or to return the call of some bird in the brush.

Now and again she sang in a clear soft voice some ballad of love or adventure, and it was this voice carrolling high and clear that the men lolling upon the ground at the midday camp heard, as she dashed into their midst, flung her rein over her horse's neck, leaped to the ground, and before her astonished father could get his breath to reprove her, had thrown her arm about his neck and was laughing into his eyes.



"Why Alice Holcomb," he cried in amazement, "How did you get here, and what do you want?"

"Daddy," Alice answered with her sweet ringing laugh, as she deftly loosened her horse's cinch and unstrapped her saddlebags, "I don't want anything on earth, but my dinner and good company. I've got my dinner here, and if you won't be good company, then I'll have to talk to Jose, or to some of these gentlemen," and she looked roguishly about her.

"But Alice, where are you going?"

"I don't know, Daddy, but I'm going wherever you do."

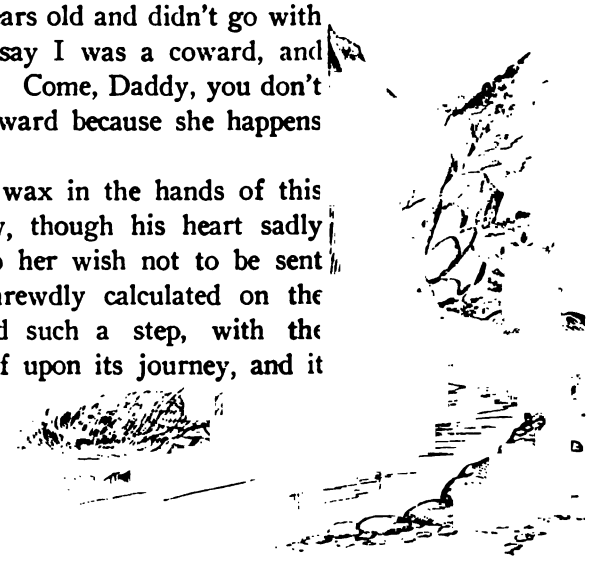
"But there's danger, Alice. We may have a fight. You may get shot."

"Now look here, Daddy, I am just half as big as you are, and therefore make just half as good a mark for a bullet; so you see I stand just half the chance of getting shot."

"But I can't allow this, you'll have—"

"Now Daddy," she wheedled, with her pouting red lips touching his cheek, "don't be cross with me. If I were a boy twenty-four years old and didn't go with you at such a time you'd say I was a coward, and your heart would be broken. Come, Daddy, you don't want your child to be a coward because she happens to be a girl?"

Holcomb was always as wax in the hands of this beloved daughter, and now, though his heart sadly misgave him, he yielded to her wish not to be sent back home. Alice had shrewdly calculated on the difficulty that would attend such a step, with the expedition a day and a half upon its journey, and it



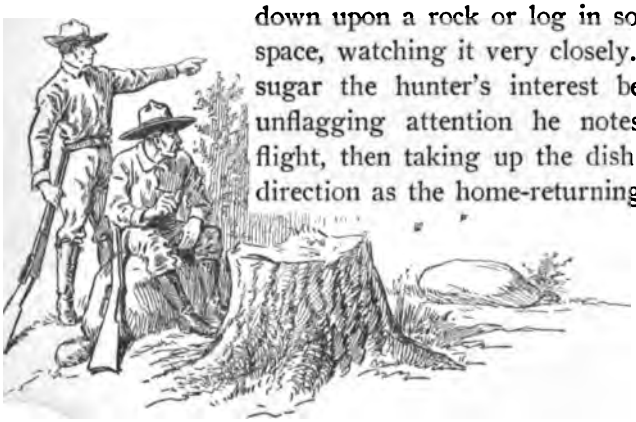
was with a glad heart that she saw the yielding in her father's face.

That night the party camped at Seven Oaks, and the next morning as Alice held a cone of sugar that she had brought in her pouch up to her horse, who was fond of this particular dainty, a bee lighted upon the lump of sweetness. Soon there came another bee and another, and Alice, laying the sugar on a rock, watched the little insects.

As the bees would get their fill they would fly away, all in the same direction. Her father had come up and two or three of the men, and with her were watching them. "Hello!" said one of the watchers, "there must be a bee-tree somewhere near. Have you got any more sugar, Miss Alice? If you have, come along and we'll 'line them.' "

Lining bees is a process practiced only in a country with plenty of timber and few inhabitants, and almost unknown to all except the pioneer, who resorted to this plan to supply himself with a substitute for sugar, an article very difficult to get and sometimes entirely unattainable in the backwoods.

The bee hunter takes a little sugar in a dish, and going into the wilderness or mountains, sets the sweet down upon a rock or log in some comparatively open space, watching it very closely. If a bee lights in the sugar the hunter's interest becomes intense. With unflagging attention he notes the direction of its flight, then taking up the dish he moves in the same direction as the home-returning bee. In another open



space farther on, he again places his dish of sugar where the bees may reach it, again observes them gorge and turn homeward, and repeating this process finds the tree.

Holcomb had already come to the conclusion that this was a good place to make a halt and had sent Jose and another man upon a scout to see if they could discover any signs of El Estranjero's party or what had befallen them.

The suggestion to "line" the bees, therefore, was quickly adopted and Alice entered into the sport with zest. The bees having filled themselves with the sugar, all took the same direction, and following them cautiously, their home in a great pine tree was soon found and robbed of its sweet store by a skilled bee hunter in the party, several hundred pounds of honey being the reward. They carried away all they wanted, and it was then determined to move on through the enchanted wood of Barton's Flat and establish their temporary camp on the Santa Ana, leaving a rear-guard to meet Jose and come on with him.

As Alice lay that night rolled up in her blanket in the lee of a rock sufficiently distant from the camp fire for privacy, but near enough for protection, she looked up at the solemn night sky studded with its stars and her thoughts went out to the man she loved.

Somewhere in these mountains he too lay under the stars, he too was enwrapped by the mystery of the brooding night. In her mind there was no thought that she had done an unmaidenly thing in coming

forth in this manner, and no disguise to herself of the fact that the central impulse that had led her here was to secure knowledge of him.

How would she bear it if Jose should bring back the news that he was dead or mortally wounded? Something in her own heart quickly repudiated the suggestion. "He is not dead," she told herself, "no, he is somewhere in this wilderness alive and unhurt, and every forward step will take us nearer to him."

He did not love her, well she knew that. Over and over she had told herself that sad fact, so often that it now had lost its first sting. A woman's love does not always depend upon her being loved in return,

Alice thought, and any one who thought that it was immodest to love without return, was sordid minded. It would be immodest to reveal it to one who did not love, but not so to experience it.

That night while Alice slept out under the stars, Estranjero lay beneath an oak tree at the crest of the low hill bordering the cienega on the edge of the desert. A blanket spread tent-wise on some saplings marked the place where Nawona slumbered, worn out with grief and travel. Over there to the left was the camp of the men who had shared with Estranjero the hardships of the past few weeks.

Their faces were set toward home. They would find there the love of wife, children or kindred. But here was he like a dead leaf borne hither and thither upon the wind, and there yonder was the white girl they had rescued. Their fate was much alike. Neither

could remember home, friends, or any past, different from the present. He would befriend her, should she not find favor with the Holcomb family.

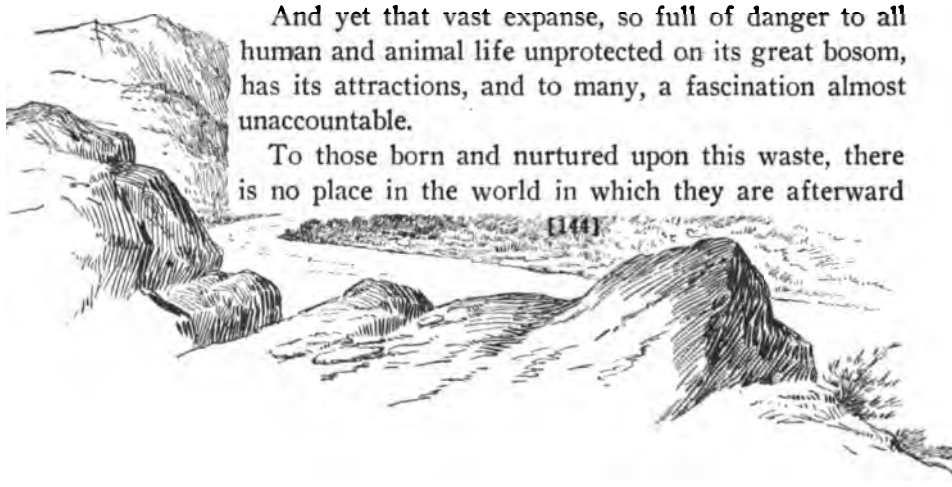
Then thinking of the kindness of the dwellers of the house with the patio toward himself, he reassured himself of her welcome there, and then his mind drifted to Alice, and with her face before him he passed into slumber, and who can doubt that somewhere in that space where the souls of sleepers meet, his soul met hers and was content.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE RETURN JOURNEY

They were breaking camp, and Philip stood with Nawona and El Estranjero ready for the journey across the mountains to Elevado. It was a picturesque spot, where they had passed the night, and to Philip in the exuberance of youthful vitality it seemed the most lovely of any they had seen on that long journey. It may have been because now, the strain of pursuit ended, he could better apprehend this beauty, or it may have been some subtle influence of the morning, and of the presence of the young waif of the woods, whose confiding and happy glances rested now upon him and now upon his companion.

On one side of them flowed a stream, its dashing spray sparkling in the sunlight in all its crystal purity, bedewing the grass and overhanging foliage along the banks with freshening drops that hung like tear-drops from a Peri's eye. Behind them was spread the great glistening deserts, whose burning sands extended in every direction as far as the eye could reach.



And yet that vast expanse, so full of danger to all human and animal life unprotected on its great bosom, has its attractions, and to many, a fascination almost unaccountable.

To those born and nurtured upon this waste, there is no place in the world in which they are afterward

satisfied. There are those who have been compelled to escape the mortal terrors of "The Great White Plague," to take up their abode upon the desert, and have become so infatuated with the life that upon their recovery nothing could induce them to return to their former homes.

To Nawona, the desert had been a kind nurse and playfellow. Here she had gathered the dry bladder-like seed pods that the Indian children attach to horsehairs and cause to float in the air like toy balloons. Here she had watched gorgeous sunsets and nights of ethereal mystery and beauty, and it was with tear-dimmed eyes that she took up the trail with her new friends that led her to a strange and untried life.

That night they camped upon a high ridge and when the weary comrades of her march were lost in slumber, the young girl raised herself from her bed of pine boughs and sat watching the entrancing beauty of the night, her heart full of strange emotions.

Below and far away lay the desert, its border sharply defined by the fringe of foliage that marked the edge of the mountain zone and added its charm to the view of the waste. The moonlight upon the nearer woods and mountains brought out every feature of the landscape.

In the distance and above it all, towered the great peaks of Grayback and San Jacinto, with their snow-covered summits gleaming in the soft light and outshining the brightness of the desert below. Like sentinels guarding this semi-tropic beauty they stood

forth in their stately grandeur, visible to the eye from every point of the range and of the desert and even from the broad expanse of the distant ocean.

Upon this entrancing scene the wakeful girl gazed long in silent contemplation. Her troubled thoughts were soothed. Her grief for her dead and the fear for her future were merged into a great peace. Her mind turned to her new companions, to the grave, handsome El Estranjero, whose gentle manner and constant silent thoughtfulness for her comfort kindled in her a warm feeling of affection, impelling her often in that day's march to keep near him, as she felt a vague comfort in his presence.

She thought too of Philip, and blushed as she remembered how his ardent glances had met her own shy eyes, and the admiration that, even untutored as she was, she read in them. He had laughed and sung that day, he had jested and smiled, and his gayety and good nature had lightened the long miles, and his infectious hilarity was proof against every accident. Sometimes where the trail had revealed a particularly beautiful view he had called her attention to it.

How different were these men from the silent and stolid beings with whom her life had been passed. How enchanted seemed that day's journey with the mingling fragrance of forest pine and waving fern, the dewy freshness of the mountain air greeting the senses at every step, causing the blood to tingle in the veins, thrilling the being in every fiber.

Nurtured as she had been in the desert and the mountains, seen now under the magic light of a new hope and promise for the future, they too seemed new and full of a hitherto unknown beauty.

Morning found her still in the peace and glamour of the moonlight, and as the days went by Philip noticed, with something of a feeling akin to jealousy, the strong mutual attraction that seemed to grow between the girl and El Estranjero. It was at his feet that she sat when the venison was distributed at mealtime. It was to him she put her questions and made her confidences, and although Philip had volunteered to teach her English, and as they went along translated the Mission patios for her into English sentences, which she repeated after him, it was to El Estranjero that she spoke those sentences when she had once mastered them.

To Philip himself her manner was straightforward but shy with a shyness that he secretly thought most adorable, and at the same time attempted to vanquish by his own light-hearted gayety. Traveling thus, in good health and with light hearts, the little party journeyed toward Spring Rock camp, where they expected to meet the two men who had been wounded in the fight with the middle division of the hostile band.

CHAPTER XXVII

BLACKBERRYING

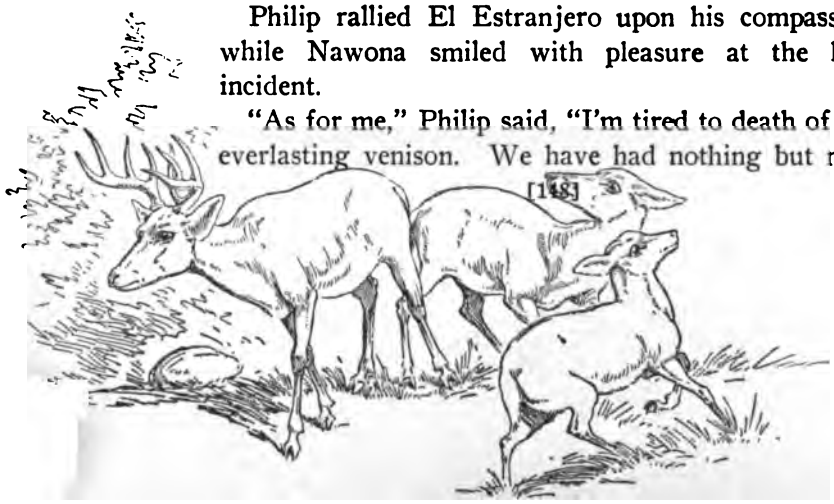
It was now only a day's march to the Spring Rock camp, and as Nawona, though uncomplaining, showed evidences of fatigue, El Estranjero decided to rest here while the others of the party hunted for fresh meat to replenish their nearly exhausted supply.

It was early in the morning, the forest had just awakened, and the joyous notes of the birds were resounding from every bush and tree. All of the hunters except Marco, Philip, and El Señor had dispersed to the chase, and these, with Nawona, were still seated about the embers of the camp fire, the two white men with their guns across their knees about to arise and take to the chase, while Marco was to remain in camp with the girl.

As they were chatting, two beautifully spotted deer raced through the camp within three feet of them, but neither man raised his gun to fire, the grace of the hunted creatures and the pathos of their frightened glances softening their hearts.

Philip rallied El Estranjero upon his compassion, while Nawona smiled with pleasure at the little incident.

"As for me," Philip said, "I'm tired to death of this everlasting venison. We have had nothing but meat



and bread now for weeks, and I for one am ashamed to look a deer in the face."

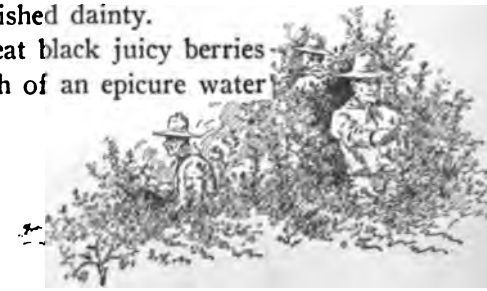
"I'm always ashamed to look a deer in the face," replied El Estranjero, "and most hunters are unable to kill the pretty creatures for the joy of killing. It is only the need of food that makes me a deer hunter. But come, Philip, we must do our part."

The two men strolled away together, keeping a sharp lookout for game. As they neared the top of a ridge, they saw a tangle of greenery with clusters of ripe berries glistening in the sun.

"Blackberries," cried Philip. "Let's fill our pouches and take them back to camp. I've a craving for fruit and vegetables that is almost a mania. Now if we could only find some wild celery we'd have vegetables as well as fruit, but I can't remember any place around here where it grows, but I do remember that blackberry patch now, and wonder why I didn't think of it before."

Philip and El Estranjero propped the mouth of their pouches open with a stick at the top and bottom, so that the fruit might not be crushed. Philip set his gun against a tree, and El Estranjero slung his upon the strap about his shoulder, and, using the broad leaves of the oak pinned together with twigs into a cup as a picking vessel, they set to work to fill their knapsacks and contribute to the camp luncheon what they knew would be a much relished dainty.

The vines were filled with great black juicy berries that would have made the mouth of an epicure water



with anticipation. The berry-eating denizens of the wildwood had made no impression upon them, and to the thrifty soul of Philip the tons of this delicious fruit wasting upon the ground brought the greatest regret that they had no means of saving it for their farther journey.

After having eaten to their hearts content, the two men began to fill their pouches. Soon they became absorbed in their work, and so gradually became separated by a little cove. Here Philip placed his pouch upon the ground, and picked with great energy, for the berries here were so plentiful that he could fairly gather them by the handful, and almost without moving from the spot, he filled his pouch.

He now determined to assist El Estranjero in filling his, and had picked his leaf cup full and was turning to proceed toward his companion, when he heard a slight noise in the direction of the place where he had left his berries.

Turning, he was astonished to see a cub bear calmly eating from his pouch, evidently greatly enjoying the result of the morning's labors. For a few minutes Philip stood and gazed at him, as, like a kitten, the little fellow stood patting the ground with his fore-paws while munching the berries, keeping up at the time a good-natured noise midway between a purr and a growl.

Philip laughed at the sight, and then remembering that the cub was encroaching upon the camp luncheon,

he ran toward the animal crying, "Hi there, you little rascal."

The cub held his ground, and Philip picked up a small stone as he ran, and when within about ten feet of him threw it with such good aim that it struck him squarely upon the back with great force. The cub squealed pitifully and started to run, but in some manner the strap of the pouch slipped over his neck and he was unable to free himself from it.

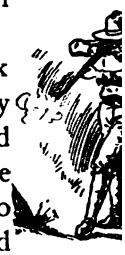
The dangling impediment frightened him so badly that he rolled over and squealed, then up again, he was off, squealing at every jump.

The sight was so ludicrous that Philip laughed loud and heartily in spite of his vexation at losing his full pouch, and El Estranjero appeared around the point of the cave to inquire into the cause of his hilarity. What he saw, however, was no cause for laughter.

"Philip," he cried, "Philip!" Turning his head at the call, Philip saw him point behind the place where he, Philip, stood. Quickly facing about, he saw to his horror an immense she-bear making toward him with mouth open and eyes glaring, growling at every leap.

The cub had started in the direction of Estranjero, and Philip's rifle was about a hundred yards away. His one thought was to reach his gun and seize it before the bear could get him. He was a college trained athlete, a runner of almost unexampled agility, and felt confident that he could outstrip the bear. This

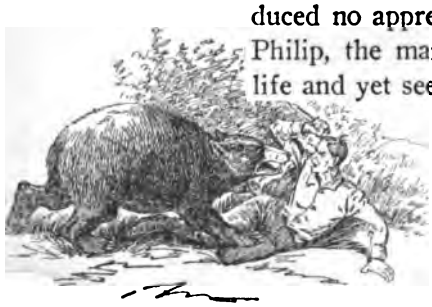
he might have done had he not tripped, almost at the outset, upon a vine and fallen sprawling upon the ground. He had only time to turn himself and draw his hunting knife before the bear was upon him, one great paw upon his breast, the red mouth open, tongue lolling and the vicious teeth exposed in an angry snarl as it lunged its head toward him.



Philip, retaining his presence of mind, struck fiercely at the glaring eyes, and then without any definite aim jabbed at the brute's muzzle. He had often wondered how a man would feel in the presence of a danger that might mean death, if he had time to reflect upon the perilous moment. Philip had braved great dangers, but at those times had been so absorbed in action that he had no time to note his own feelings.

Strangely enough, the ferocious appearance of the great brute seemed to inspire him with no terror, and he was surprised at this and at the calmness with which he analyzed his sensations. He caught himself speculating, as he jabbed at the bear with his knife, on the degree of pain he might feel should the bear succeed in breaking his guard and fastening her gleaming white teeth in his face or neck.

A feeling of apathy stole over him, an impersonal benumbed sort of condition totally unmixed with fear. Was this himself acting in this tragedy or some other person who concerned him so little that his fate produced no apprehension or even excitement? Was he, Philip, the man who was fighting so fiercely for his life and yet seemed to care so little? Ah, yes, he now



remembered that persons and animals lose all fear of death when they realize that it is inevitable.

Such were his thoughts in the few seconds that he lay literally within the jaws of death. He had forgotten that Estranjero was near. His whole objective consciousness was dormant in the face of this danger, but his subjective mind was as clear as sunlight, and was not only fully aware of all that was happening, but for the moment had assumed the function of the objective and was reasoning from cause to effect.

Suddenly there was a deafening explosion so close to him that it startled him into his normal self, and the next instant the huge bear fell across his body, knocking the breath out of him and rendering him wholly unconscious.

When he came to himself, which he did almost instantly, the bear's body had been pulled off from him and El Estranjero, white and anxious, knelt beside him, mopping with his handkerchief his chest, which was bleeding from the scratches of the bear's claws.

Philip sat up and looked about him. He smiled a little shakily as he rose to his feet. He was unhurt, for the scratches were only superficial.

"Well, comrade," he said, as he spurned the bear with his foot, "we won't have to eat venison for lunch even if the cub did spill my berries. Where's my knapsack? Oh, there it is! I think, hereafter, Señor, I will carry my gun on my back, as you do."

"I think it would be wise," said Estranjero.

Philip picked up his fallen hat and came and gazed

down upon El Estranjero, who was examining the huge carcass. "Señor," he said, "this is the second time you have saved my life, and you have doubled the debt I owe you."

"You owe me nothing," El Estranjero returned with a frank smile. "I have only done what you would have done for me or another under the same circumstances. I happened to be the one nearest you both times, and accidents will happen in a life like this. You'd better go back to camp now and send Marco with the pack horse. I will dress the bear and then we'll bring it in. Bear steak will taste good with these berries."

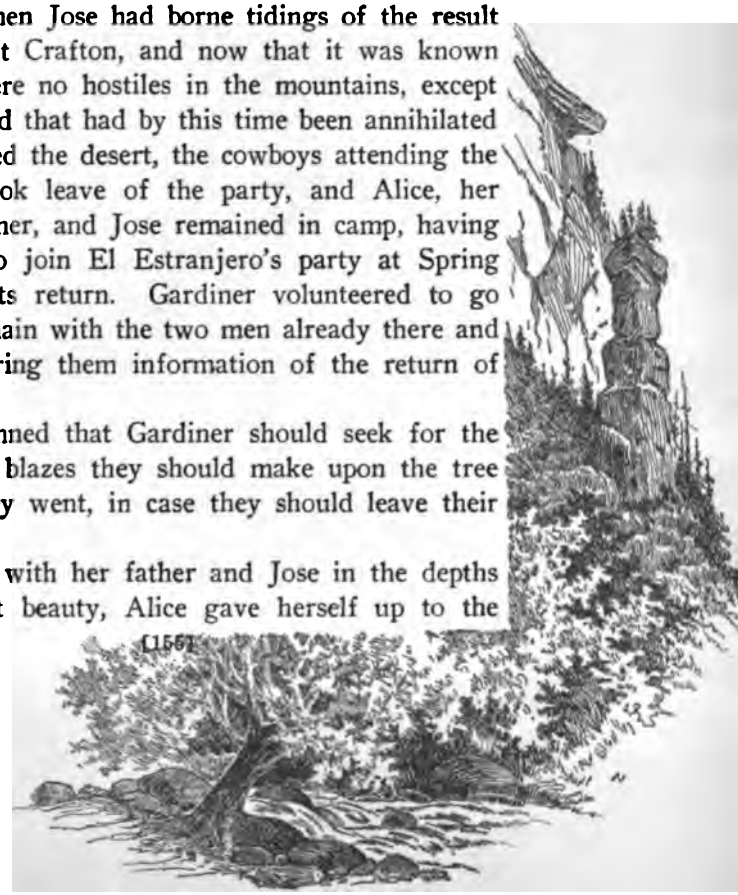
El Estranjero handed Philip his well-filled pouch and set to work upon the bear. Philip quickly made his way to the camp, where his disheveled condition excited Nawona's tenderest concern, and, while Marco went with the pack horse to help El Estranjero, Philip surrendered himself to the girl's ministrations. As she washed and dressed his hurts with an unguent she carried in a beaded pouch at her slender waist, Philip longed to take the busy brown hands in his own and cover them with kisses, and he even confessed to himself afterward that he had rather unnecessarily exaggerated his suffering, in order that he might feel the sweet balm of her pity.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CAMPING

Holcomb's little party was encamped upon the head waters of the Santa Ana, for Jose had come with the news of the pursuit of the larger band of Indians and its destruction in the Pass, and of the two scouts who had been injured in the fight but were making good progress and there awaited El Estranjero's return.

To these men Jose had borne tidings of the result of the raid at Crafton, and now that it was known that there were no hostiles in the mountains, except the small band that had by this time been annihilated or had reached the desert, the cowboys attending the expedition took leave of the party, and Alice, her father, Gardiner, and Jose remained in camp, having determined to join El Estranjero's party at Spring Rock upon its return. Gardiner volunteered to go back and remain with the two men already there and at once to bring them information of the return of their friends.

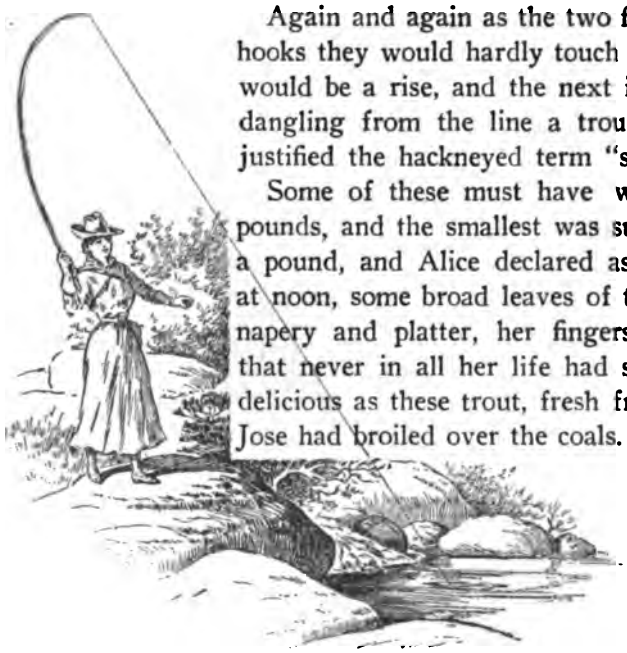


It was planned that Gardiner should seek for the party by the blazes they should make upon the tree trunks as they went, in case they should leave their present camp.

Left alone with her father and Jose in the depths of this forest beauty, Alice gave herself up to the

enjoyment of the sylvan life. For the first time since childhood she had the delight of her father's company from morning till night, and over and over again she made him confess that her running away to come to him was nothing less than an inspiration.

They moved their camp to the head waters of the Santa Ana. Here in the early dawn Alice and her father, with the fishing rods that Holcomb always carried when he went even upon a trip like this, where the food supply must be derived from nature's storehouse, and with bait from the mold near the banks of the stream, fished for one whole forenoon with such substantial results that Jose was busied all the afternoon dressing their catch and cooking it for future needs, for the pioneers wasted none of the good gifts of the woods and streams, nor ever killed for the love of slaughter.



Again and again as the two fishers would cast their hooks they would hardly touch the water before there would be a rise, and the next instant there would be dangling from the line a trout, the size of which justified the hackneyed term "speckled beauty."

Some of these must have weighed at least two pounds, and the smallest was surely three-quarters of a pound, and Alice declared as she sat under a tree at noon, some broad leaves of the oak serving her as napery and platter, her fingers for knife and fork, that never in all her life had she tasted anything so delicious as these trout, fresh from the river, that old Jose had broiled over the coals.

"Fished for one whole forenoon."—Page 140

left her alone for an entire day and tramped away with his gun upon his shoulder.

He came back late at night, foot-sore and tired, but empty handed. Alice had received glad news that day, and her excitement and the charm of the moonlight was upon her, and she was awake and waiting for him when he came in.

"Why, Daddy," she cried, "Where's your game?"

"Bring me some supper and I will tell you."

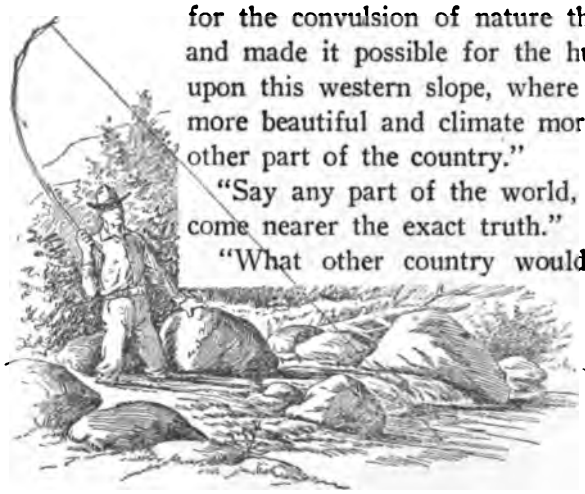
She brought him some of the squirrel stew and cold broiled fish that had been reserved for him and settled herself to talk to him as he ate.

"Lassie," he said at last, as satisfied with his meal, he lighted his pipe and leaned back against a tree to enjoy it.

"Lassie, have you ever thought what this country of ours would be without these mountains? Without this natural barrier that holds back the sands of the desert and prevents their spreading to the sea?"

"It would be a desolation, Daddy, that makes me shudder to think of."

"Yes, my girl, a desolation. We should be thankful for the convulsion of nature that uplifted the earth and made it possible for the human family to exist upon this western slope, where the surroundings are more beautiful and climate more perfect than in any other part of the country."



"Say any part of the world, Daddy, and you will come nearer the exact truth."

"What other country would afford a horseback

journey that can be made in two hours from the snow-line on the mountain top to the golden-globed orange grove and the home of the fig and vine, where the flowers bloom not only in the spring but where their fragrance charms us through all the long golden year?"

"Why, Daddy, you are becoming quite poetic."

"I believe," continued Holcomb, dreamily, "that this country grows more and more beautiful each year. Oh, yes, you said I had grown poetic. I have been to-day to the home of that streamlet, the place where it was born, a place of poetry."

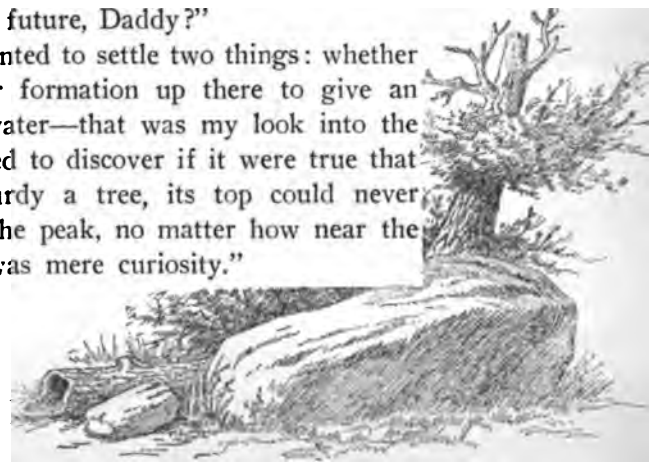
He made a gesture toward the babbling brook that, clear as crystal and cool as the snow from which it came, dashed over the rocks and stones near by.

"Tell me about it, Daddy," said Alice. She loved to hear her father talk at all times, for the feeling between the two was profound and tender, but most of all she loved to hear him when in this mood.

"Sometime our valley down there is to be as thickly settled as is Belgium. But first of all there must be water to irrigate the thirsty fields, and to-day I climbed Grayback to take a look into the future."

"To look into the future, Daddy?"

"Yes, Alice, I wanted to settle two things: whether there was a glacier formation up there to give an endless supply of water—that was my look into the future; and I wanted to discover if it were true that no matter how sturdy a tree, its top could never reach higher than the peak, no matter how near the top it grew—that was mere curiosity."



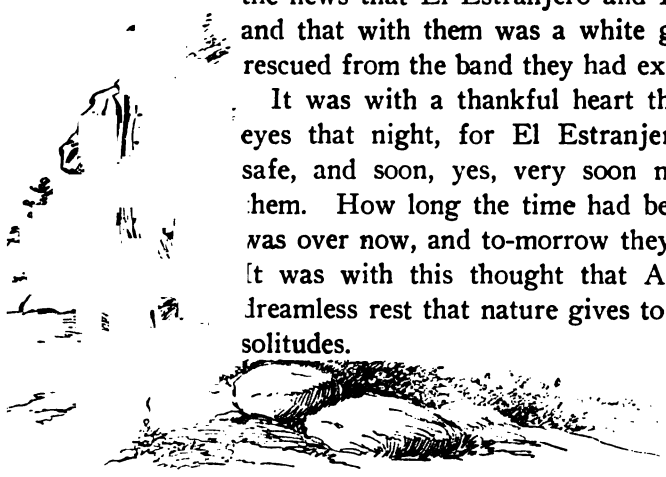
"And what did you discover?"

"I found an old glacier formation that would be interesting to the scientific man, and satisfied myself that the streams born in those heights will furnish a sufficient water supply to irrigate all the fertile lands which lie down there, spread out from the mountains to the ocean."

"And the trees?"

"I found pine trees three feet in diameter, that owing to the action of the winds reached a height of but four feet, whose outspread branches extending more than twenty feet in every direction from the trunk, were as flat as a table."

On the morrow they were to journey to Spring Rock, for Gardiner had come in during the day with the news that El Estranjero and Philip had returned, and that with them was a white girl whom they had rescued from the band they had exterminated.



It was with a thankful heart that Alice closed her eyes that night, for El Estranjero and Philip were safe, and soon, yes, very soon now, she would see them. How long the time had been, but the waiting was over now, and to-morrow they would meet again. It was with this thought that Alice sank into the dreamless rest that nature gives to those who seek her solitudes.

CHAPTER XXIX

AT SPRING ROCK

The day's journey to Spring Rock was ended and El Estranjero and his companions were surprised to find three men there instead of the two they had expected to see. When El Estranjero recognized Gardiner he hurried forward, eager to hear the news from the valley.

Gardiner was no less surprised to see a slender young girl dressed in the Indian garb but unmistakably white, walking by El Estranjero's side, for the two men wounded at the Pass had not learned of the presence of the girl in the advance Indian band.

Soon the whole party was gathered about Gardiner, who graphically related to them the story of the Crafton raid and set at rest the doubts that any might have entertained that the defeat of the Pah-Utes was now complete and overwhelming.

For hours El Estranjero and those who accompanied him were alternately listeners to and narrators of adventures, and long before it was light next day Gardiner was on his way back to Holcomb's camp, which he found without difficulty because of the blazed places upon the trees along the way the little party had taken.

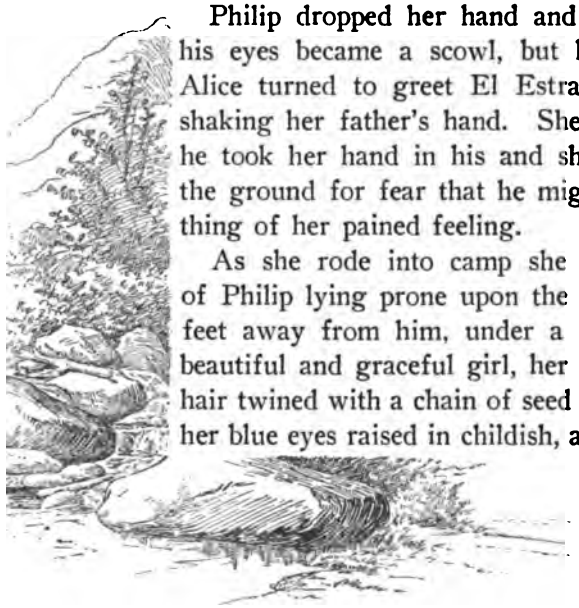
It was the middle of the forenoon when Holcomb

Jose and Alice rode into El Estranjero's camp at Spring Rock, and as Gardiner had neglected to speak of Alice's presence with the party, the surprise of El Estranjero almost made him dumb.

Philip was lounging on the grass, his head upon his knapsack, and as he sprang to meet Alice, his face lighted with joy and surprise.

"Why, Chummie," he cried, giving her a hug as he helped her out of the saddle and kissing her half a dozen times, "where on earth did you come from?"

"Let me go, Philip," she cried playfully, as she heartily returned his caresses. "Let me go, you bear. Why, bless me," she said, standing off, holding both hands and looking at him, "Phillie, lad, you're as thin as a racer, and you're actually getting wrinkles between your eyes, you've grown so much older since I saw you last."



Philip dropped her hand and the wrinkle between his eyes became a scowl, but he said nothing, and Alice turned to greet El Estranjero, as he finished shaking her father's hand. She felt cold all over as he took her hand in his and she cast her eyes upon the ground for fear that he might see in them something of her pained feeling.

As she rode into camp she had seen the picture of Philip lying prone upon the grass, and a hundred feet away from him, under a great oak tree, sat a beautiful and graceful girl, her long curling unbound hair twined with a chain of seed buds of the wild rose, her blue eyes raised in childish, and it seemed to Alice,

adoring confidence to El Estranjero, who was bending over her, speaking in low, rapid tones.

In her presence he had always been silent and somewhat constrained. With her there was never this eager interest, this low-toned sustained talk. This was no momentary passion, like that which had moved him that moonlight night when the mocking bird sang in the rosebush. His face was transfigured into a tender and touching beauty. In the wild he had found this beautiful creature, had rescued her, and loved her.

Philip, too, had been watching the couple under his half-closed lids for an hour. He was too far away to hear what they said. He drew his conclusions regarding their mutual feelings, not from this one occurrence alone, but from the numerous other things that he had noticed in the days since Nawona had been with them.

"She was attracted to him the very first moment," he said to himself, in bitter mood. "She listens to every word he says, she follows his every movement, and she cuddles near him as though she liked to be where she could reach out her hand and touch him.

"With me, though," his thoughts ran on, "she is altogether different. When I speak to her, she colors to the edge of her hair. If I am alone with her five minutes, she makes some excuse to leave me or join the others. When I speak, she casts down her eyes and seems not to be listening, and it was I who saved her, it was I who found her and thought for her; and

it is I," he always admitted to himself, "it is I who love her, yet I am nothing to her."

Nawona, too, had her thoughts as the golden-haired girl upon the horse rode into camp. She had seen animation supersede gloom on Philip's face, and the enthusiasm with which he welcomed the newcomer.

"Is it then the young Señor's sister?" she questioned El Estranjero.

"No," he replied, but he had no time to explain their relationship, for he immediately went forward to greet his old friend Holcomb.

El Estranjero, too, had noticed Philip's welcome, and the pain that he felt made his own greeting seem cold and constrained.

For the moment all seemed to have forgotten Nawona, but Philip was the first to notice where she stood a little withdrawn, her hands clasped in front of her. He sprang to her side and taking the loosely clasped hands in his own, led her trembling and frightened to Alice.

"Chummie," he said, "this is our Nawona, our little white maiden whom we found a prisoner with the Utes."

The clear blue eyes were raised shyly to those of Alice, who impulsively put both arms about the homeless girl and kissed her on both cheeks.

"You dear little nut-brown lady," she said kindly, "you shall be my sister. I have never had a sister, Nawona, and have always wanted one."

Alice spoke in English, and Nawona comprehended

only a few words of what she said, but the kindness and sweetness of her manner won Nawona instantly and at the touch of the red lips she smiled through a mist that gathered in her eyes.

"Speak to her in Indian, Chummie, she doesn't know what you are saying."

Alice patted the girl's brown head as it lay against her shoulder and repeated, "I want you to be my sister, little Nawona, and to live with me and let me love you and teach you. What do you say?"

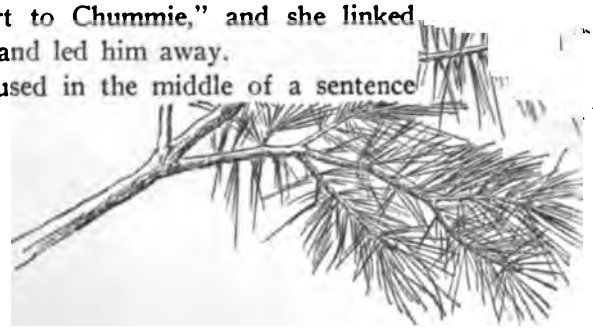
"I say that the Señorita is lovely and kind, but before I answer as my heart wills, I must first speak to him, El Estranjero, my good friend, and tell him that you would care for me."

"Go then," said Alice, a little unsteadily. Almost instinctively Alice raised her eyebrows inquiringly as she glanced at the gloomy Philip.

"Yes," he said, as if in answer to a question, "it was a case at first sight, I think. By Jove, it's hard on me, for I tell you, Chummie, I've seen many a sweet girl, but never one like this wild rose of the desert. Oh, Chummie," and the boy's voice broke in spite of himself, "I can't tell you how it hurts, but it's worse than being attacked by a wild-cat or clawed by a bear, and I know how both those things feel."

"You, too, Laddie!" replied Alice. "Come, let us walk a little down there in the shade and you shall pour out your heart to Chummie," and she linked her arm within his and led him away.

El Estranjero paused in the middle of a sentence



and watched them go, while Nawona turned resolutely away and with the stolidity she had learned from the women among whom she had been reared, made her face an imperturbable mask as she sank down at the foot of an oak and cast her eyes upon the ground.

Holcomb, with the amiable stupidity of his kind, saw nothing of the expression upon either face, but was deep in his story of the rout of the Indians. While they compared notes on the casualties sustained by the enemy, it was decided that all of the party except themselves and Jose should be allowed to go to the valley, and that they would remain here where game was plenty for a few days to allow Nawona time for complete rest from the severe fatigues that so much traveling had entailed. Holcomb's own horse would serve for a pack horse, while Jose's and Alice's would suffice for the needs of the girls.

Marco and Manuel, leading the burro to which they now had joint ownership, Gardiner and Juan with the scouts who now eagerly set forth for the valley, made a cavalcade of a dozen persons, and these had packed and begun their journey an hour before Jose's mellow call summoned Alice and Philip from their conference in the shade of the great oaks, where the stream babbled along in the moss.

CHAPTER XXX

CONFIDENCES

"Now, Laddie, I want the whole story, from the very beginning," Alice had said, taking off her sombrero and fanning her flushed face. "I want you to tell me everything that has happened from the time you left up to this very minute."

The tale proved to be more exciting than she had imagined. Philip told of the attack of the wild-cat and how El Estranjero's presence of mind saved his life. He related the story of the blackberry picking, and how again El Estranjero rescued him from death.

The story of the long pursuit, the discovery of the white girl by the pool, the trail across the desert, and the opportune arrival of himself and Juan to save Nawona from the clutches of the wounded brave was all told with a simple directness that held the girl's breathless attention.

In imagination, as he talked, she saw Estranjero leading his men through the wild Pass and over the deep ravines. She could see him at the camp fire and on the march, and she could see him, too, with the fair captive by his side in the long hours of their return journey. She could understand the girl's deep infatuation for such a man, for had not she herself fallen a victim to his personal charm, and she had

seen many men while Nawona had known only the rude savages among whom she was reared.

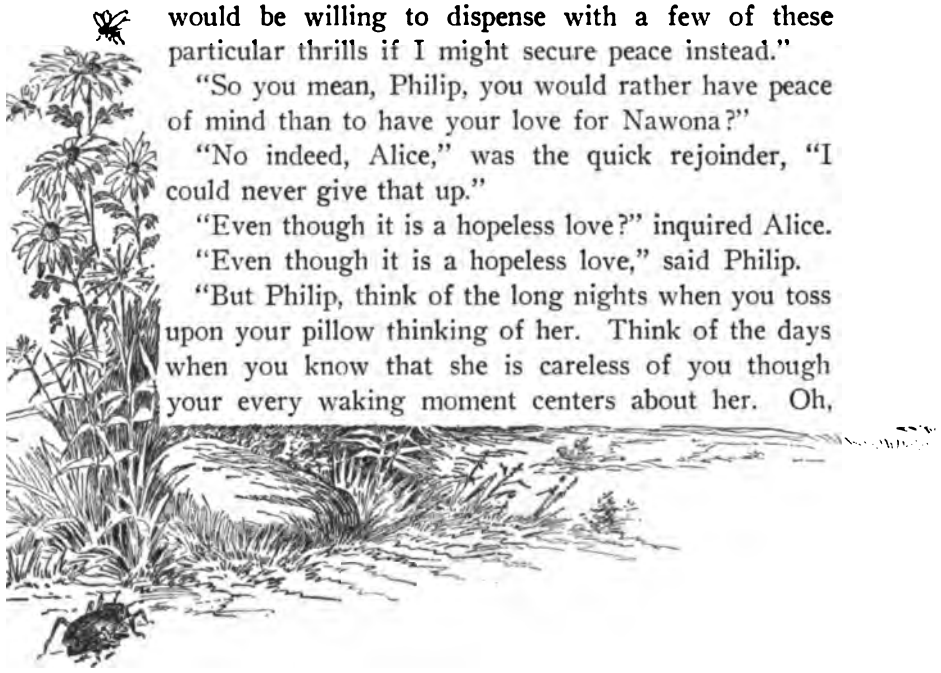
"I loved her from the very first, Chummie," Philip said, a flush mounting to his forehead as he made the confession. "I loved her the moment I saw her down by the pool, and I have gone on loving her more every day and hour since.

"Now, Alice, I suppose you don't believe in love at first sight, and maybe you don't believe at all in such unreasoning love as mine is."

Alice was silent, her face instantly grave.

"You are mistaken, Laddie," she said softly. "You are entirely mistaken. I was smiling because I was thinking of what you said about 'thrills,' in the patio that morning, before you started on this campaign. I was thinking that the thrills were coming thick and fast for you."

"They are indeed, Alice," replied Philip, "and I would be willing to dispense with a few of these particular thrills if I might secure peace instead."



"So you mean, Philip, you would rather have peace of mind than to have your love for Nawona?"

"No indeed, Alice," was the quick rejoinder, "I could never give that up."

"Even though it is a hopeless love?" inquired Alice.

"Even though it is a hopeless love," said Philip.

"But Philip, think of the long nights when you toss upon your pillow thinking of her. Think of the days when you know that she is careless of you though your every waking moment centers about her. Oh,

Philip, would you not give up a hopeless love if you could? Is the pain of it not more than the pain of renouncing it?"

Philip had raised himself upon his elbow and was gazing at Alice curiously, but her eyes were fixed upon a swaying branch far ahead and she did not notice his fixed attention.

"Laddie," she continued softly, her slender hands plucking a tuft of grass, "it is a strange thing, this love that tortures you, and yet will not be crushed by coldness or neglect or distance. It is a strange thing, surely, this love that lures and lashes, that feeds and fills with hunger at the same time."

His silence caused her to turn and meet his look.

"Chummie, you were not thinking of me at all, while you were saying that."

Alice colored but held her peace.

"Chummie, you're in love yourself."

Alice turned away her flaming face.

"Now look here, Chummie, tell me who's the man, and I'll go out and persuade him with a club, if I can't make him reasonable any other way. What's his name, Chummie? I am your father-confessor now; as you have listened to my tale of woe, I'll listen to yours, and we'll console each other."

Again Alice was silent. Swiftly Philip thought over the various men with whom he knew Alice to have been acquainted, and as swiftly his mind rejected them all. Jove, it was some one out West here, some one Alice had met after leaving him in St. Louis. He

had noticed a change in her as soon as he arrived, and more than once since he had thought about it. It had been most pronounced since the night of the Rodeo, when she walked home with El Estranjero.

It came to him then like a flash; the look upon Alice's face when El Estranjero went away without saying good-bye to her; the strange brightness in her eyes so often when she had glanced at him. Yes, it was El Estranjero, he now had no more doubt of it than if Alice had confessed it.

"Chummie," he said, taking both her hands and making her look at him, "You needn't tell me, I know already, it is El Estranjero."

The girl's face grew white. Had she then showed her preference so plainly that even her gay, careless young cousin had seen it? Was that the reason Estranjero never repeated his question of the night in the patio? Was her love given so swiftly that it seemed worthless to him?

All these queries passed through her mind, but she said not a word.

"Chummie, you are a cool-headed, clever girl, and you never gave the least sign that anybody not as deep in love as I am, could have interpreted, and I never thought of it myself until this minute, but I know it's El Estranjero. Poor little cousin, and you, too?"

"I too, Philip," Alice breathed.

"Why, Chummie, he's years older than you."

"His soul is in its first youth, Laddie."

"You know nothing about him, Chummie."

"I know all that he himself knows."

"But he does not love you, dear."

"Ah," said Alice, laughing through the tears that gathered in her eyes, "and Nawona does not love you, dear. It strikes me, Laddie, we are in the same boat, and all we can do is to comfort each other till the sea swallows us up."

Just then Jose's clear call to dinner startled them.

"Go, Philip," she said. "I will come in a minute."

She laved her face in the brook, brought into order the disarrangement of her hair, and then humming a careless tune, came into camp and, sitting down by Nawona's side, charmed away a sadness that seemed to have stolen over the young girl.

CHAPTER XXXI

A LESSON IN LOVE

That afternoon Nawona went alone to the brookside. There in the shadow of a great rock in a cove, sheltered from all observation, was a deep and quiet pool. The girl removed her garments and plunged into the pool, sporting in the water like a fish, her white limbs and body making an odd contrast with her sun-browned face.

When she had tired of swimming, she clothed herself, spread out her wet hair to dry, then combed it rudely, braided it with the chain of red seed buds wound through the strands, put the cincture with its eagle feather about her forehead, and sat looking sadly into the mirror-like surface of the water. Soon she threw herself down upon the ground and wept unrestrainedly, her slender hands clenched, her body shaken with sobs.

Here El Estranjero, who had killed a buck which he was carrying into camp, came upon her, and as he had lifted a little freckle-faced, long-limbed girl from the shade of an orange tree so long ago and dried her tears, so he now lifted Nawona.

"Poor little girl," he said softly, pressing her cheek against his shoulder, where she lay still sobbing, "poor little girl, El Estranjero is sorry with you that you must weep for the chief who was your father."

Nawona was making a strong effort to control herself, and soon sat up and wiped her eyes.

Then El Estranjero noticed her hair, dressed again in the Indian manner.

"Why, Nawona!" he said in surprise, "why do you braid your hair again and wear the eagle's feather?"

"Oh, my friend," sighed the girl, "I am but a poor Indian after all, even though my skin is white! I know nothing, my hands are brown, my face is ugly. But, oh, she is like a lily with her golden hair and her white forehead. She is so beautiful and so good, and I am ugly and ill-natured and ungrateful. Leave me here in the woods to die, El Señor, for how can anyone love me?"

"Poor little girl," El Señor said, "and are you jealous of Alice? Dear little Nawona, you are pretty, too, and you are sweet and winsome, though you do not know it. All love you, and in a few months your own skin will be as white as Alice's and she will teach you many things, for she is good."

Nawona dropped her head in shame at her petty outburst, and with nervous fingers began to unbraid her hair and shake its curly length about her face. The eagle's feather she cast away with its cincture.

"Oh, Estranjero, I am ashamed, ashamed!" she said. "I am a wicked girl, but see, I have thrown the feather away. Now I will try to learn of the Señorita to be sweet and unselfish like she is, and shall pain you no more by my bad temper."

She smiled at him now, but it was a wan little smile, and the tears were very near it.

"What is it, little maid?" questioned El Señor, kindly. "You know that I am ready to give you counsel in any trouble. What is it that hurts you so?"

"She is not his sister," murmured the girl, "and yet he held her and kissed her as men do who love their squaws."

"Not squaws," corrected El Señor, "that is Indian. Say sweetheart."

"Yes, sweetheart," said the girl, her voice lingering lovingly on the sweet word. "Then he goes away with her alone, and they stay long and talk together."

"You are speaking of Philip?" softly questioned El Estranjero.

"Of Señor Philip. Yes."

"Oh," he said with a faint smile, "and you did not like it that he should kiss Miss Alice and talk with her alone?"

"No," said the girl, simply.

"And why did you not like it?" asked El Señor.

The girl pouted her pretty lips and said nothing.

"Why did you not like it?" El Señor insisted.

"Oh, my friend," the girl said, raising her eyes to his face, "why does the moonlight make me sad? Why does the bird song make me weep and laugh at once? Why does every hour seem long when Señor Philip is not near? Why does the whole day seem like an hour when he is with me?"

"Why, indeed, little girl," El Señor said, "only you can answer that."

"He came to me when I was alone and in danger and he buried my father and brought me to you on the mountain. Always he chose the smoothest places for my feet, always he brought me the best food and the coolest water. Often I tried to thank him, but when I look at him, so tall and beautiful, it is as though I looked at the sun and was dazzled, and can not speak."

"Why, little maid? Why?" El Estranjero gently asked again.

"Yes, why?" the girl repeated. "Why does his touch make something here," and she laid her hand upon her chest, "to hurt? Why do I wish to hide from him, yet wish to be near him? His smile is like the spring to me, his frown like the winter, and now the Señorita has come and he will smile on me no more."

She looked sadly away toward an empty nest in a blasted pine, and the Señor's glances followed hers.

"Nawona," he said kindly, "the Great Spirit brought you to us through many dangers. We can not have all the blessings of life. Do you not wish Señor Philip to be happy?"

"You know, Señor, I do."

"Do you think he is happier with you or with the beautiful golden-haired Señorita?"

"Never have I heard him laugh as loud as to-day," replied the girl, "though he is often gay. It has been

long since his face has been as smiling as it is to-day. I think it must be," she said with a pause between every word, "yes, it must be, because of the Señorita."

"Nawona, you love the Señor Philip. You are young, you will see many men as handsome. Your feeling will pass."

The girl slowly shook her head.

"Yes, Nawona, it will pass. What would you give Señor Philip to make him always happy?"

"Any thing, all things, even my life; but I am a poor girl, I have nothing to give."

"Yes, Nawona, you have something to give, and true love always gives. Love is giving, not receiving. Here in the woods and among the people that you have known, love means possession, does it not?"

The girl assented.

"And if one wants what another has chosen, what is done?"

"They fight," answered Nawona, with a shuddering recollection of the struggle over her father's body. "They fight and the strongest takes. And if it is a woman, they beat her if she does not wish to be taken. She must follow her master wherever he leads."

"But the white man does not beat the woman. He chooses only where he loves. She follows willingly, because she loves," said Estranjero.

"Yes," assented Nawona.

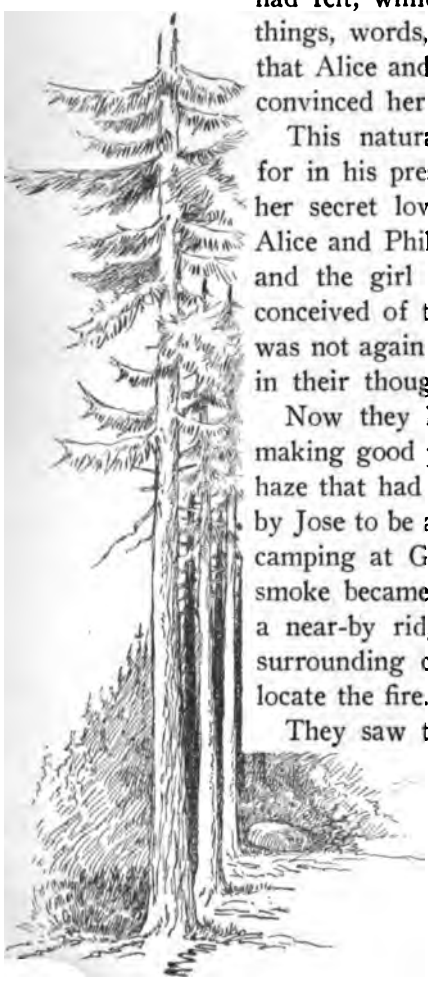
"Now you and I must learn the noblest part of love," said El Estranjero, speaking more to himself than to her, "we must learn to be silent and give no

sign. We must learn to suffer and never to weep. We must learn to renounce, and somewhere the Great Spirit will give us our heart's desire. Come, little sister."

Hand in hand they returned to the camp.

CHAPTER XXXII

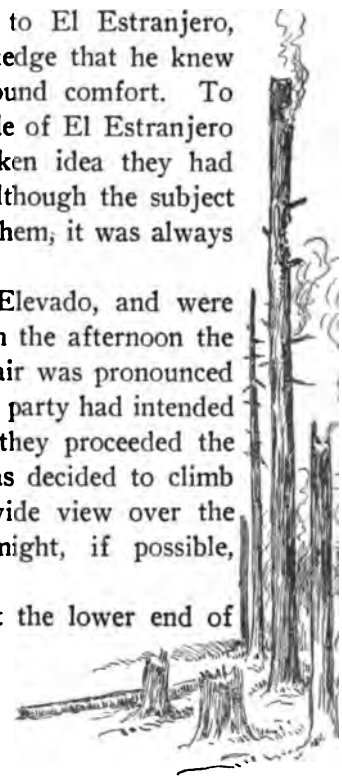
BY THE EVENING FIRE



The days of close companionship in the camp had quite worn away the distrust of Alice that Nawona had felt, while at the same time a hundred little things, words, glances, and long strolls in the woods that Alice and Philip were wont to take together, had convinced her of their mutual affection.

This naturally drew her close to El Estranjero, for in his presence, and the knowledge that he knew her secret love for Philip, she found comfort. To Alice and Philip the mutual attitude of El Estranjero and the girl confirmed the mistaken idea they had conceived of their relations, and although the subject was not again mentioned between them, it was always in their thoughts.

Now they had turned toward Elevado, and were making good progress when late in the afternoon the haze that had all day been in the air was pronounced by Jose to be a mountain fire. The party had intended camping at Glenn Ranch, but as they proceeded the smoke became so dense that it was decided to climb a near-by ridge commanding a wide view over the surrounding country, that they might, if possible, locate the fire.



They saw that the dry grass at the lower end of

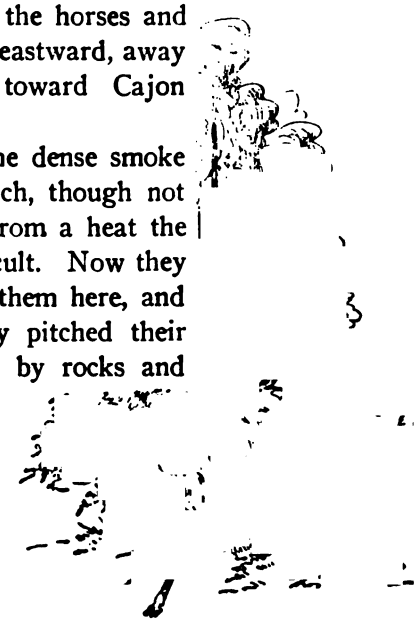
Glenn Cañon had in some way been fired. A current of wind from the ocean was driving the smoke and flame up through the valley in great volume, and that the fire was traveling almost with the rapidity of an express train.

Their chief concern now was to avoid this danger, and to find a trail that would take them around the apparent track of the fire.

As they descended the ridge, there rushed past them, hurrying out of the smoke that now curled over its summit, a wild-eyed doe and then her mate. A moment later a wild-cat crossed their path, and hardly had they taken a dozen steps until a pair of coyotes loped down the hill, swerving and turning aside from them, but seeming to have less terror of the men who were their natural enemies than they had of the fierce red danger behind them.

They could hear other animals crashing through the underbrush, and the girls felt relieved when they again reached the place where they had left the horses and Jose led them to a trail he found to the eastward, away from the track of the conflagration toward Cajon Pass.

In half an hour they were out of the dense smoke and emerging into an atmosphere which, though not entirely clear, was yet bearable, and from a heat the intensity of which made breathing difficult. Now they were safe, as the fire could not reach them here, and after they had crossed the Pass they pitched their camp in a secluded place, surrounded by rocks and



gigantic trees, one of those beautiful spots so common in the picturesque mountains of California.

It was quite dark when they reached this point and all were fatigued by this trying day's journey, but when the camp fire was built and Jose had prepared a venison stew that would have made the mouth of an epicure water, they were unusually gay as they ate their evening meal. When this was over fresh fuel was heaped upon the fire and they all stretched themselves luxuriously upon the ground to enjoy it, for the air grew more and more chilly with every night, and the camp fire was now necessary to their comfort.

Alice had spread her blanket upon the ground, and as her father and El Estranjero lighted their evening pipes, she placed the saddles upon a convenient hummock that made them serve as a rest for a weary back, and drawing Nawona down beside her, leaned her elbow upon her father's knee.

Holcomb was gazing meditatively at the fire. "Daddy," she said, "it's a great shame that Glenn Canyon should be burned out in that way. It's one of the most beautiful places in all these mountains. It's a pity it should be literally destroyed."

"The foliage will grow again," Holcomb responded, "but for many years it will be a desolate place, with charred and blackened shrubs and trees that mar the landscape. Fire makes a hideous desolation when it is let loose in these mountains."

"I should think," Philip remarked, "that some means could be found to check these fires before they

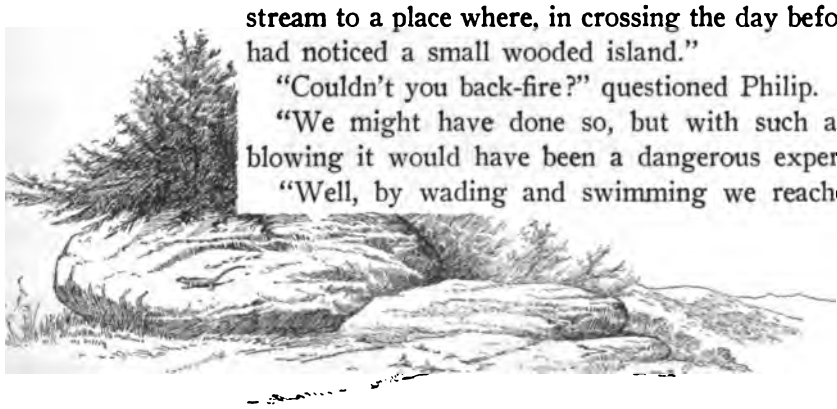
"One of those beautiful spots so common in the mountains of Southern California."—Page 180

fire-stricken portion of the country has been deluged with rain, nature has restored its beauty, and the smiling landscape has a carpet of green, completely hiding the scars of the fire from sight."

"Were you ever in one of those fires?" questioned El Estranjero.

"Yes, on the Des Plaines River, west of Chicago, I once had such an experience. It was in the fall, and a party of us, on our way overland to the West, had camped on the banks of the Des Plaines. After dark we saw a curious glow upon the sky to the west. It had soon deepened into a long red glare, extending clear across the horizon, and we knew that it was a fire a long distance away.

"The fire burned all that night, and all of us were wakeful. Luckily, the wind had gone down about dark, and we hoped that the fire would burn itself out before it reached us. All night the sky was aglow, and we decided to remain where we were until we were sure it was burned out. About ten o'clock in the morning the wind began to blow from the west at the rate of about forty miles an hour. We saw the blaze revive and leap forward, and we hastily broke camp and retreated about two miles up the stream to a place where, in crossing the day before, we had noticed a small wooded island."



"Couldn't you back-fire?" questioned Philip.

"We might have done so, but with such a wind blowing it would have been a dangerous experiment.

"Well, by wading and swimming we reached the

island. Some of our wagons were drawn by oxen, and we had much trouble in getting these and other cattle we were driving across, but we accomplished it at last, and formed our wagons about in a circle and placed them within, so that they could not be stampeded by any wild cattle that might cross to the island the way we had come.

"There was plenty of fresh green grass here. It covered the island, and the green foliage was not such as would catch fire easily, either, so we felt secure and thankful as we watched the oncoming fire, which was driving before it great herds of buffalo whose terrific bellowing filled us with consternation. If they should happen to come our way the river channel would not save us.

"Fortunately the herd was headed farther down the river and about the place where we had been the night before. They thundered on to the bank, and if the leaders of the herd tried to stem the onward rush it was too late, as its momentum carried it into the stream until the waters were full of the drowning wretches. And still they blindly rushed to their fate until the river bed was filled from shore to shore, making a bridge of flesh for the oncoming of the thousands to cross, and damming the stream until it overflowed its banks."

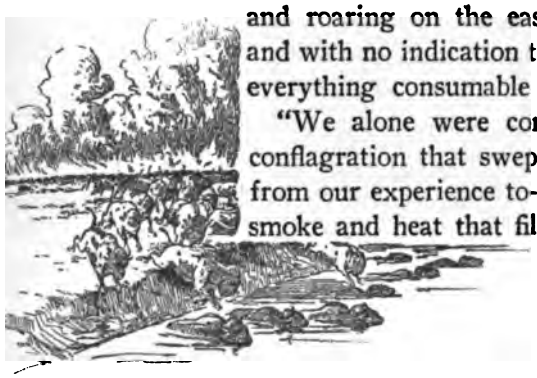
"Gimini!" ejaculated Philip, "how many do you think there were?"

"We could not estimate the number, but thousands upon thousands. Many wild creatures also came to

the island for safety, but were so badly frightened or exhausted that they huddled in peace together. Even predatory creatures like the prairie wolf and wild-cat made no attempt to appease their hunger upon their natural prey.

"That night a doe lay under my wagon all night and some prairie dogs crept into the blankets of one of my companions. I tell you, if St. Patrick had been on that island he would have lost his reputation if he had attempted to drive the snakes off, for there were more snakes there than any one mortal saint could attend to. They were so plentiful that we had to pick our way around to keep from stepping upon them, and they covered the grass so that our animals could not eat until we had driven the snakes aside so they could feed.

"For the sake of the creatures that had taken refuge upon the island, as well as for ourselves, we had hoped that the river would stop the progress of the fire, but in this we were doomed to disappointment, as the fierce wind carried burning wisps of dry grass across the river and set the plain on the opposite bank on fire in a thousand places. The flames were soon racing and roaring on the east bank with a fury unabated and with no indication that they would ever abate until everything consumable had been devoured.



"We alone were comparatively untouched by the conflagration that swept the land. You can imagine, from our experience to-day, how we suffered from the smoke and heat that filled the air, and how fortunate

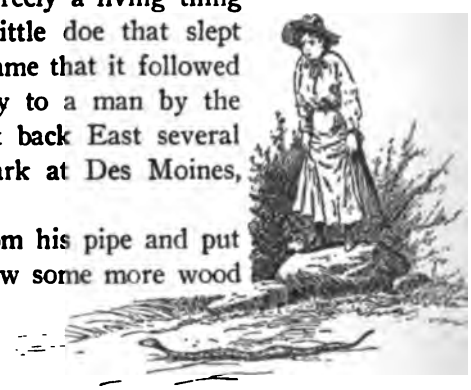
we thought ourselves that our only troubles were those which grew out of the proximity of creeping and crawling things.

"I didn't like to wake up to find a big gopher snake coiled upon my stomach, or to shake a couple of more venomous reptiles out of my shoes when I wanted to use them myself in the morning. It wasn't pleasant to feel field mice running up your sleeves or to know that sundry wild animals were watching your every movement from the brush.

"We knew we would have to stay on the island as long as there was food if the weather held clear, but fortunately, the next day after the fire passed us, there was a soaking rain lasting all night, and three days after this, little blades of grass began to prick their spears through the blackened sod, and we resumed our journey."

"What became of the lizards and snakes and other friends you left behind you?" asked El Estranjero.

"Oh, they had begun to decamp as soon as the rain ceased, and when we were ready to start there was, so far as we could determine, scarcely a living thing remaining on the island. The little doe that slept under my wagon had become so tame that it followed us, but in Iowa we gave it away to a man by the name of Allen, and when I went back East several years later, I found it in the park at Des Moines, living in peace and plenty."



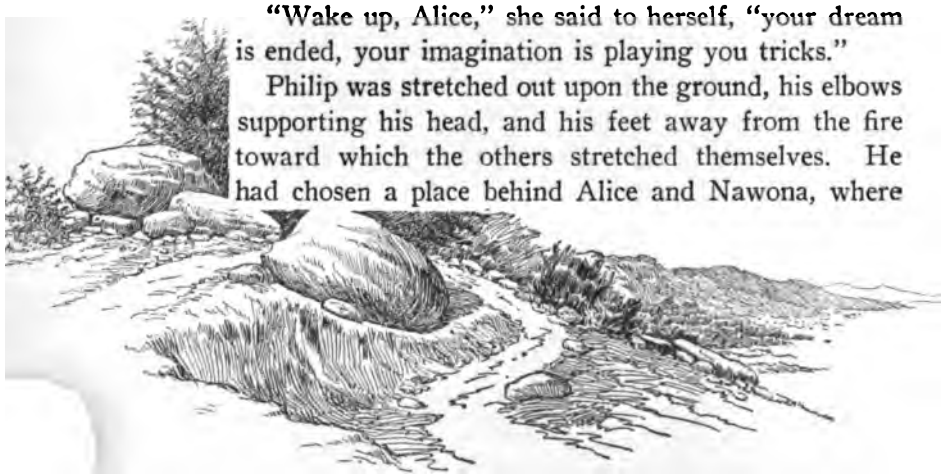
Holcomb knocked the ashes from his pipe and put it into his pocket, and rising, threw some more wood

upon the fire. The glow leaped up, casting weird shadows about them. Nawona was reclining against the saddle, her gaze upon the flame. Alice from the shadow of her sombrero, which she had pulled over her forehead as if to shield her eyes from the glare, was watching the firelight upon Estranjero's face. She noticed how worn he looked, as though he had passed sleepless nights. The gray eyes were sad, and there was something wistful in the set of the usually firm lips. He was off the guard which he had so long maintained over his features, and the girl, as she guardedly watched him, felt that all was not right with him.

"What can it be," she thought, "that troubles him?" Once during her father's story he had turned his gaze toward her and there was such yearning in the look, such a passionate tenderness in his face now that he thought himself unobserved, that it brought back to her the song of the mocking bird, and his cry, "Alice, it is my soul speaking to you, can you not reply?"

Then she remembered his attitude toward Nawona, the manner in which they seemed always to seek to travel together and to confide in each other, and she mentally gave herself a sharp shaking.

"Wake up, Alice," she said to herself, "your dream is ended, your imagination is playing you tricks."

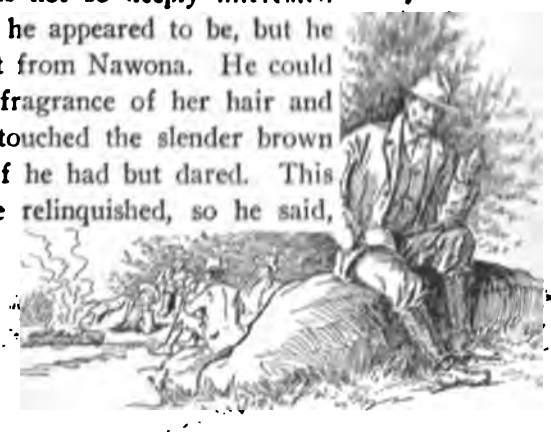


Philip was stretched out upon the ground, his elbows supporting his head, and his feet away from the fire toward which the others stretched themselves. He had chosen a place behind Alice and Nawona, where

by reaching out a hand he could touch either. A long curling tendril of Nawona's hair straying over the saddle which served her as a pillow almost touched his hand. Cautiously he drew its silken length through his fingers, and pressed it to his lips. A sudden movement of Nawona's head before he could release the tress, caused her to turn in astonishment. She laughed good-naturedly, and Alice, at once divining what had happened, tweaked his own waving forelock sharply, saying, "There, you naughty boy, that is because you pulled Nawona's hair. Come round by me, sir, where I can see what you are doing. No, you don't," as he sought to escape her, "come right here," and she settled him, to his great content, between them upon the blanket, where without moving he could see every expression upon the pretty face of the now blushing Nawona, and as Alice sank down beside him, he gave her hand a grateful squeeze and whispered to her, "Chummie, you're a good fellow."

This little stir now being over and Holcomb having replenished the fire, Philip was determined to have another story.

Truth to tell, Philip was not so deeply interested in his uncle's narration as he appeared to be, but he was reclining only two feet from Nawona. He could smell the faint woodland fragrance of her hair and clothing, and could have touched the slender brown hand that lay beside her, if he had but dared. This was a situation not to be relinquished, so he said,



"Uncle, tell us the Buffalo Bill story. I haven't heard it since I was a kid."

"Please do, Daddy," Alice pleaded. El Estranjero and Nawona added their entreaties, both protesting when Holcomb declared that he feared the garrulity of an old man might weary them. So with great content Holcomb settled himself and began.

"I was given quite a scare some few years later when hunting with a friend. I was with a party hunting buffalo, when one of them, William F. Cody, since famous as a scout and hunter (and known all over the country as 'Buffalo Bill') became separated from the rest, and the crack of his rifle was all we needed to hear as evidence that he had successfully bagged his buffalo.

"We were all busy in our camp on one of the numerous 'buttes' found in that part of the West, when suddenly one of the party called out 'Fire.' In a moment every eye was turned in the direction of Buffalo Bill, and to our horror we saw that he was already cut off from our camp by a prairie fire that we had just noticed. Instantly the entire camp was all excitement, every one suggesting a way to save 'Bill,' as he was familiarly called. Up to this time it was evident by his actions that he did not know of his danger. He was apparently engaged in skinning the dead buffalo, and so busy that he had not looked up, and consequently could not have seen the fire.

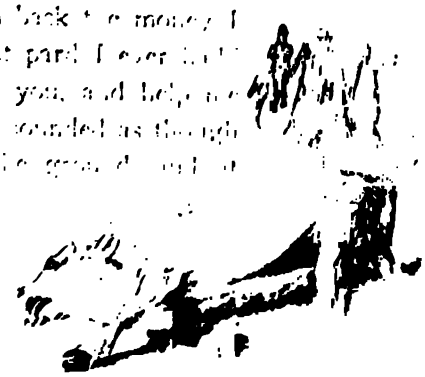
"Realizing that we could not help him, I fired my

rifle as a warning. He heard it, and for the first time seeing the fire, started on a run towards our camp, but came only a short distance, when he suddenly stopped, turned around, and slowly retraced his steps to the dead buffalo. At this moment the fire and smoke intervened and we could see no more of our poor old friend 'Bill.'

"We were camped out of range and out of all danger from fire, but absolutely helpless to aid our luckless comrade. After the fire had swept past and the ground was sufficiently cool to travel, 'Missouri Joe,' as he was called, an old and loved comrade of Buffalo Bill's, and I saddled up our horses and picking our way carefully down from the 'Butte' rode towards the spot where we had last seen him, for the purpose of finding his body and giving him a decent burial.

"When we reached the spot, there lay the dead buffalo, singed and black with fire and smoke, but not a sign of Buffalo Bill or his remains. 'He's wiped out, he's wiped out,' cried Missouri Joe, with the tears rolling down his cheeks. 'He's the squarest pard I ever had, and he's passed in his chips. I wish to God that I had been as square with him. I cheated him in our last game of poker and feel cursed mean about it now. I wish I could give him back the money I took, I surely do, he's the squarest pard I ever had.'

"'Oh, hold your tongue, won't you, and help me out,' called a smothered voice that sounded as though it came from somewhere under the grass, and



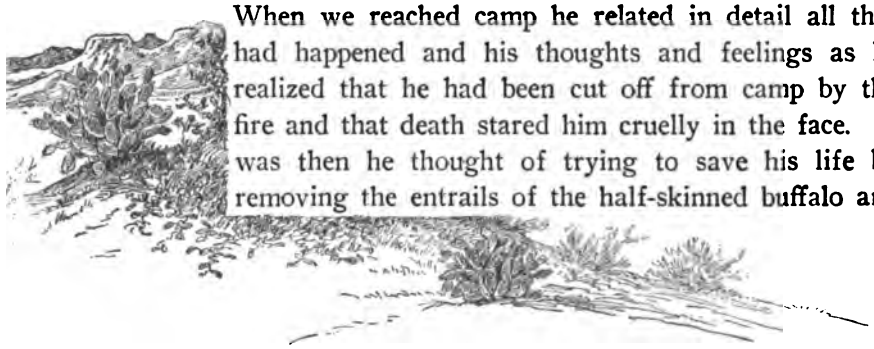
the same time a hand was thrust out from the side of the dead buffalo and waved for assistance.

"'Help me out, won't you, and do it quick, I'm smothering here.' Missouri Joe sat back in his saddle and laughed long and loud and made no move towards assisting his old pard, as he called him.

"'Help me out, won't you? Stop your infernal cackling, won't you, and get me out of this, you old sardine.'

"Still Missouri Joe made no move to assist him, but laughed all the louder, so I jumped from my horse and taking my hunting knife, cut away the front of the carcass at the opening that by the action of the fire had become smaller since Bill had got into it, and helped him to crawl out. His head covered with grease which dripped from his hair and saturated his clothes, gave him such a ludicrous appearance that I could not blame Missouri Joe much for again indulging in one of his boisterous and prolonged laughs.

"Buffalo Bill waited some time for him to finish laughing, and when that seemed useless, he turned towards the carcass, and, seizing his hunting knife, coolly resumed the operation of skinning the buffalo. When we reached camp he related in detail all that had happened and his thoughts and feelings as he realized that he had been cut off from camp by the fire and that death stared him cruelly in the face. It was then he thought of trying to save his life by removing the entrails of the half-skinned buffalo and



crawling inside. By pulling the hide down over the opening in the body, he was able to protect himself from the flames on that side, and suffered only from heat and smoke, which for a time were so intense as to almost suffocate him."

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE LEGEND OF THE ARROWHEAD

"Nawona," said Philip, turning to her, breaking the brief silence that had fallen upon them when Holcomb finished his story, "you have been with us two weeks now. Do the ways of the whites seem very different from those of the Indians? You have a fair chance to judge of us now, for we are in the same surrounding as those in which they live."

He spoke to her in the corrupted Spanish of the Mission Indians with now and then an Indian word. She replied in the same tongue, but no description can give the soft slurring of the terminal consonants, the musical lingering upon the vowels, for Nawona spoke unlike an Indian and like the Spanish Señoritas of the olden time.

"Señor Philip," she said, her full glance upon him. "One thing I notice is that you are gentle to women and you seek the best for them always. I suppose it is to me to be contented, more happy than I have ever been before."

"Nawona," interrupted Alice, "Do you know anything about your capture, how you came to be with the Utes?" This was the question all had longed to put to the girl, but had refrained from asking, thinking that should she mention the subject they would press their queries.

"I know only what I remember and what my father, the chief, told me," she answered.

"Tell us what you know, Nawona," El Estranjero urged.

The girl sat up, her arms clasped about her knees, and gazed hard into the fire.

"I was a very little girl, so high, maybe five summers, when I remember first the Utes. I had been sleeping, and my mother's cry awakened me, and scared me so much that I think it is why I remember."

"Your mother," cried Alice in surprise, "was she, too, among the Utes?"

"Oh, yes, Señorita."

"Go on," said Alice, while the others listened with almost breathless attention.

"It was morning, we were in the woods, and there was a camp fire. It was summer and it had been raining, for all was wet, and I noticed my own clothing was soaked, and I cried out and wept, for I was afraid as my mother shrieked.

"She was kneeling beside me, and my Ute father spoke to her. I do not know what he said, I was too young to understand or to remember, but my mother shrieked again and again. 'No! No! No!' Long the chief, my father, spoke to her, and there were other Indians, and some were Apaches and some were Utes, and the others went away through the woods and the Utes waited while my father, the chief, spoke with my mother.

"Still at everything he said she cried out, 'No!'

and again 'No!' and then she clung to me and sat down upon the ground, her long hair all wet and her face very pale.

"The chief, my father, then signaled two of his men. They came and took me away from her and I wept. Then they tied her hands and feet and they made a litter of green boughs, and they placed her on it, and carried us, me with her.

"Many times I remember the camp fire and the woods and then the desert and the woods again, but it is all like a dream of the night."

Nawona was silent, then Philip recalled her from her reverie.

"Tell us what else you remember, Nawona, for we may be able to find some of your people."

"A long time we stayed in one place, and my mother ceased to weep and she sat in the wickiup of my father, but she never smiled and she talked strange things even in the nighttime, and sang snatches of strange songs. She would not speak to me to answer my questions, but always said something strange. Then they told me that the Great Spirit had laid his hand upon her and had taken away her grief and that she was sacred, and none touched her as she came and went and all brought her food."

"She was crazed," Holcomb explained. "The Indians never harm a deranged person, and many a man has saved his life when taken captive by them by feigning to be demented."

"But with my mother it was always so. Sometimes

when we were alone she would not know who I was, and would drive me away from her, and sometimes she would shriek for hours together; then they would tie her hands and feet and lay her on the ground till she was calm again. So she was for three summers. Then she died, and the chief took from her this," and Nawona drew from her bosom the golden disk and passed it to Mr. Holcomb, who looked at it curiously, turning it about and noticing the sparkling diamonds. The trinket was quickly passed from hand to hand and eagerly examined. Then Nawona replaced it about her neck by the thong from which it depended and again hid it in her bosom.

"And is that all?" Philip asked.

"That is all," said Nawona. Again all were silent. Then Estranjero said to Nawona:

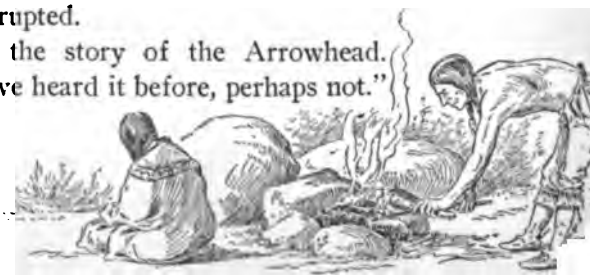
"Tell us—will you not—the little story you told to me the other day about the Arrowhead?"

"But I speak too much," returned Nawona. "It is not good that a woman should do so very much speaking."

"That is one of the notions that you got from the Indians," laughed Philip. "You will soon learn when you have lived with us for a while, that nothing is more becoming to a woman than to do the greater part of the talking."

She looked at him in some bewilderment, and then Estranjero again interrupted.

"Tell us, Nawona, the story of the Arrowhead. Perhaps our friends have heard it before, perhaps not."

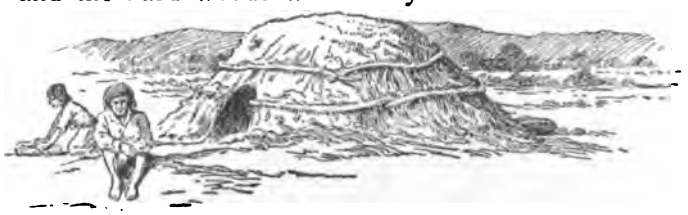


"This is the story as I have often heard it told by the Indians," said Nawona, as she lay back upon the blanket, her head pillowed upon the saddle, looking out into the starlight night and, as she spoke, watching the flickering shadows of the camp fire.

"Long ago, before the Spaniards came to the land of the Southwest, the valley was inhabited by a tribe of Indians who had come from the far East. They had been driven from their homes by fierce enemies and had come across the savage plains and the fearful deserts, led by the great Sun God, whom they worshiped, and here they had found a beautiful green valley.

"In this valley of sparkling streams, shady trees, and fertile pastures, they saw the land of promise which they had been seeking, and, building their camp fires, set up their brush and tule huts. Undisturbed by their neighbors, they dwelt in peace, with plenty all about them. The men found small game, snakes, rabbits, squirrels, and deer; there were many grizzly and black bear in the mountains, too, which came down into the valley in search of buds and berries. The hunters, however, never touched them, for the bear is a brother, and under the protection of the gods; ill would befall the daring one who did him harm or ate his flesh. The mountain lion, also, was a brother, and they crouched in silent fear when its snarl echoed from mountain to hillside.

"The hunters went to the seashore to seek for flints and the hard woods which they used in their crafts.



They shaped their arrows and clubs, bent their bows, retold the tales of their fathers, danced, played, and were happy.

"The women of the tribe found the hours pleasant, too. In this genial climate, amid kindly breezes, they found abundant acorns, seeds and roots. They made baskets in which to keep their supplies and clothing of skins and fibers; they pounded boulders into mills and mortars, and sometimes they sported with their lords, the braves of the tribe. Happily the years slipped by, and the dwellers of the valley grew fat in contentment and peace. In prosperity and comfort they forgot the Guiding Spirit that had led them safely from fierce foes through fiercer deserts into a land of plenty and quiet. They ceased to offer their sacrifices and neglected the sacred rites of their fathers.

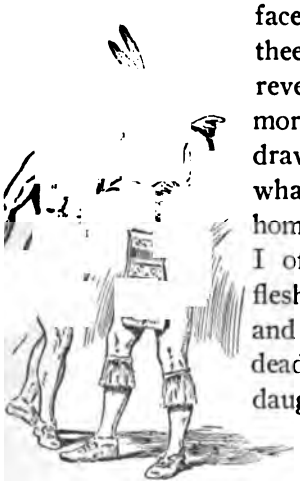
"Their great father, the Sun God, grew angry at this ingratitude. He caused the sun to send fiercer rays down upon them to remind them of him. But they had forgotten his power; they only murmured, 'Soon the rains will come.' Then he dried up the rain clouds; he caught up the ocean fogs that rolled inland and pressed them to his arms; he dried up the dews of Heaven before they touched the parching land.

"The flowers and grasses that had covered the mountain slopes and the valleys were burned crisp and black; the streams ceased to flow and the springs became dry mud holes; the leaves on the trees dried and curled up under the feverish touch of the Sun

God. Animals died or hid in the depths of the earth or mountains, and birds fled over the highest peaks. Day after day the people gazed into the vast blueness of the sky and prayed the Sun God to relent; they now recalled his power and his past service, and they prostrated themselves before him in entreaty. Men, women, and children began to die of thirst, crying in madness for water—one cooling drop of water.

"The chiefs of the tribe gathered and held solemn councils. They recollected all of the ceremonials of their fathers and now performed them all. Day and night they prayed and danced and offered gifts and worked charms. Yet the Sun God poured out his merciless brilliance upon them, and not even the darkness of the night could cool the earth or bring refreshment to the men.

"At last Counell, the eldest and the wisest of the medicine men, arose, and with the uplifted eyes and face of the prophet, he spoke: 'Oh, Chief, it is for thee to give thy most cherished treasure; thus it stands revealed—that which thou worshipest in thine heart more than the gods themselves.' The chief lifted his drawn, sun-scalded face, and asked, hoarsely: 'And what is that, may I ask? Have I not sacrificed my home and my stores? My most cherished relics have I offered and my body.' He showed his lacerated flesh and his bleeding hands. His emaciated limbs and wasted body were as a spectre of a man long dead, but Counell spoke once more. 'Thou hast thy daughter Nan-pen-ga, sister of the arrow.'



"Then the chief dropped his head upon his breast and tears that were as fire drops burned his eyes. And the other wise men all cried aloud, with hard, harsh voices: 'It is true. The Sun God demands thy daughter. Only that highest sacrifice will ever appease his wrath. The chief sat long with bowed head. Then he rose and descended the hill to the great, gaunt, leafless sycamore, underneath which his daughter and the women of the tribe lay with outstretched arms, and in panting whispers were beseeching mercy for the people. The chief bent down and touched his daughter's shoulder. She lifted her head and met his eyes. Silently she rose and followed him back up the hill to the circle of councilmen. 'Here is my daughter, my Nan-pen-ga. Do with her as the gods direct,' he said. 'Nay,' the old men replied, still standing, 'it is thy hand, oh Chief, that must save the people.'

"Nan-pen-ga, tall and straight and beautiful as the dreams of youth, although the flesh of her rounded limbs had been eaten up by hunger and the skin of her face dried and darkened by the awful heat, looked at the old men, then she turned a questioning eye upon the grief-stricken face of her father. She understood. She glanced upward to the cruel ball of fire that glowed fiercely, exultingly in the heavens, then she gazed across the barren, scorched waste where had been the fair green valley of sheltered homes. She threw back her long, unbound locks and said: 'Come,

my father, I am glad if it is for me to appease the wrath that destroys us. Come!'

"The old chiefs rose and formed a circle; the young braves came and brought dry sticks and built a pyre. With his own hands the father bound the slender wrists and ankles of his child and laid her upon the cruel bed. Then he struck the spark from the flint and watched the curling flame leap up to play with her soft hair. As the smoke rose from the sacrificing fire, it floated high and spread until it darkened the heavens and shut out the ferocious glare of the sun. The darkness grew denser and at last a dazzling flash of light leaped out of the threatening cloud and a deep reverberating peal of thunder rolled solemnly from mountain to mountain. The people fell upon their faces, shrieking in terror. Then the long pent up waters descended.

"The sun-cracked earth swallowed them; the thirst-parched Indians drank them down; the dry stream beds caught them and swirled back full; the dusty springs bubbled and foamed; the birds returned and the animals crept forth to new life.

"When the earth had been drenched and was cool and water-soaked, when at last the clouds lifted again and rolled away above the mountain tops, the people beheld blazed upon the mountain side, a great white arrowhead. The old prophet gazed at the token thus delivered, and then once more the insight of vision was given to him. 'Behold,' he cried, pointing to the emblem, 'it is a sign, a promise. Because of the

sacrifice of Nan-pen-ga, sister of the arrow, never again will the Sun God so devastate the land. Henceforth perpetually shall flow the stream and murmur the springs from this mountain side.' The light died out of his hollow eyes, the life died from his palsied form, and the old seer sank to the earth to rise no more."

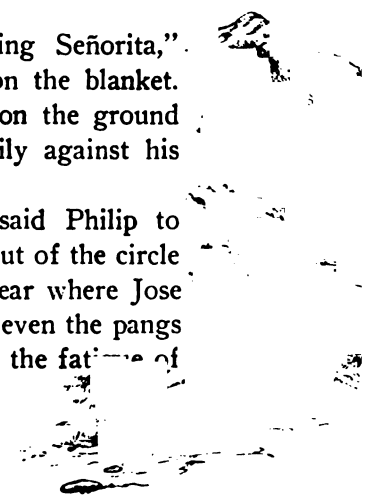
Nawona told this tale with a dramatic intensity that thrilled her little audience. When it was done she lay quite still, and Philip, reaching over in the dark, found the slender brown hand, raised it to his lips and kissed it.

"Oh!" cried the girl, springing to her feet.

"What is it?" cried Alice.

"Nothing," Nawona replied, "nothing Señorita," but she did not resume her place upon the blanket. With down-dropped eyes, she sank upon the ground beside El Estranjero and leaned wearily against his shoulder.

"She has given me my answer," said Philip to himself, and in a few minutes strolled out of the circle of the firelight and making his camp near where Jose had tethered the horses, soon slept, for even the pangs of disappointed love sometimes yield to the fatigue of hearty youth.



CHAPTER XXXIV

AN UNDERSTANDING

It was the morning of the last day in the mountains. The travelers had been astir since daybreak, and now the pack was made up, the horses ready, and the two girls were in the saddle waiting the word to start.

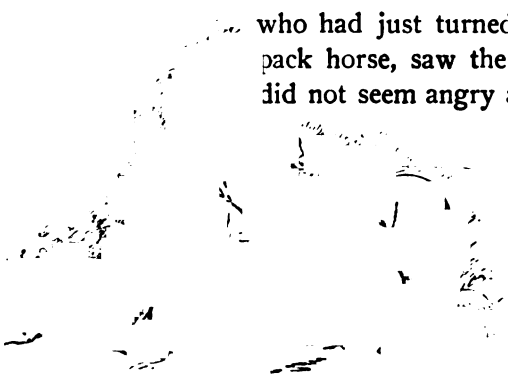
El Estranjero had tightened the girth of Nawona's saddle, and now had stepped to Alice's side and with his hand upon her horse's mane stood, with his hat in his hand, his forehead bared to the cool breeze. As Alice looked down, his eyes were raised and met hers and held their gaze. A long, long glance, in which each seemed to forget for the moment the barriers between them—then Alice colored to the roots of her hair, and giving her horse a sharp cut with her quirt rode off, calling to Nawona:

"Come, let us see the sun rise from the ridge yonder, while the others are getting ready."

El Estranjero felt as though the quirt had descended upon his own spirit, and the tears rushed to Nawona's eyes as she saw the look upon his face. Impulsively she moved her horse toward him and put out her hand.

"Do not mind, Estranjero," she half whispered.

He raised the kind little hand to his lips, and Philip, who had just turned from arranging the pack on the pack horse, saw the action and noticed that Nawona did not seem angry as she was the night before, when



he had committed the same indiscretion, but that she rode away smiling, and even turned to wave that same coveted little hand to his rival.

Over the first range the sun was just rising, piercing the translucent atmosphere with golden beams and lighting up the nearer mountains and the distant valley. The two girls watched the scene with delight, their eyes taking in the glory of the mountain and peaceful valley, and even the broad Pacific Ocean beyond, all a part of this picture.

On a plateau, just at their feet, were two deer playfully knocking their horns together in a mimic battle, and far above the plain, in the distance, circled the stately and graceful buzzard, the condor of the northern hemisphere. It was almost with regret that they turned at last to the trail that would take them over the range to the Mountain Home and down the winding course of a clear cool rivulet to the foothills and the valley below and so home.

All through the morning the two girls rode, hardly exchanging a word. Nawona was puzzling herself over Alice's evident dislike for El Estranjero, and Alice was blaming herself for an abruptness in which she feared he saw her real feelings. Philip was glum, El Estranjero abstracted, and only old Jose and Mr. Holcomb were their usual cheerful selves.

When the party stopped at midday, and Jose was gathering leaves and brushwood for a fire, Philip said to Nawona, who was idly leaning against a tree watching the preparations for the camp:

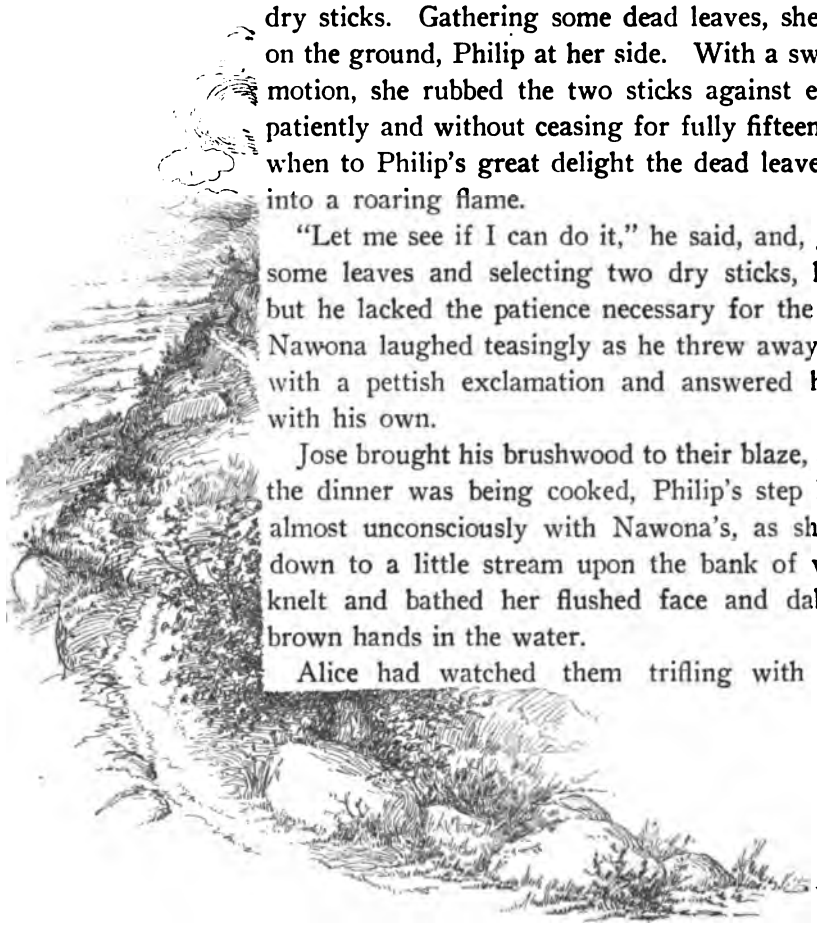
"Nawona, have you ever made a fire without matches?"

"Oh, yes, Señor," she responded, "that is easily done."

"I have heard so," replied Philip, "but I have always doubted it."

"Señor shall doubt no longer, but he must have patience. Come and I will make fire without matches."

Glad that she had apparently forgiven his blunder of the night before, he followed her as she selected two dry sticks. Gathering some dead leaves, she squatted on the ground, Philip at her side. With a swift twirly motion, she rubbed the two sticks against each other patiently and without ceasing for fully fifteen minutes, when to Philip's great delight the dead leaves kindled into a roaring flame.



"Let me see if I can do it," he said, and, gathering some leaves and selecting two dry sticks, he began, but he lacked the patience necessary for the test, and Nawona laughed teasingly as he threw away the stick with a pettish exclamation and answered her laugh with his own.

Jose brought his brushwood to their blaze, and while the dinner was being cooked, Philip's step kept pace almost unconsciously with Nawona's, as she strolled down to a little stream upon the bank of which she knelt and bathed her flushed face and dabbled her brown hands in the water.

Alice had watched them trifling with the dry

sticks, and discreetly kept her distance as she saw them pass under the trees.

"Poor Laddie," she said to herself, "he knows he is riding for a fall, but let him enjoy himself while he can."

Philip noticed with delight Nawona's total absence of self-consciousness while she made her simple toilet, and then he wondered why she should so resent his impulse of the night before. He resolved while she was in a relenting mood toward him to make what explanation he could.

It seemed hard to find a way to begin, but at last Nawona ceased dabbling her hands in the water, and sat looking almost pensively down the way they had just come.

"Is Nawona sad?" Philip inquired.

"A little, Señor. These mountains are the home I have so long known. I go from them out into a world that is new and strange."

"There are many kind hearts there, Nawona."

"Yes, Señor, I know there must be, for already I have found so much kindness."

"Then you should cheer up, Nawona; you will soon know the ways of the world, and," a little bitterly, "you will learn to hide your feelings, to say 'yes' when you mean 'no' and 'no' when you mean 'yes,' and be like the rest of them."

"But why should I do that, Señor? My tongue is not crooked nor my heart dark. I will say what I mean."

"Do you do that now?"

"Always, Señor," she replied, opening her eyes widely at him in an astonishment that made her look almost childish.

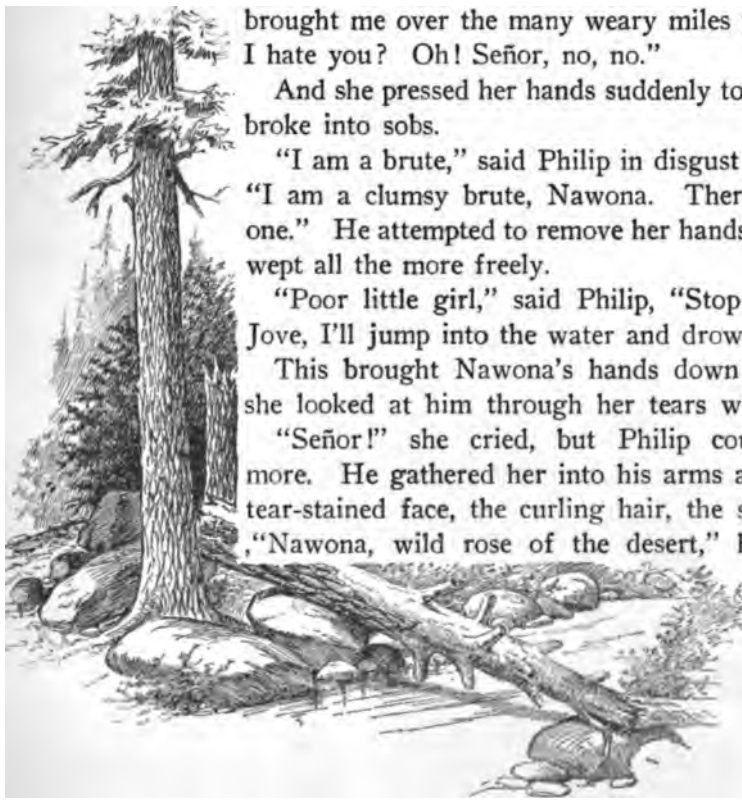
"Good, then," said Philip, "then you must say it now. Do you hate me, Nawona?"

"I hate you?" said the startled girl.

"But do you?" he persisted.

"Oh, no, and again no," she said earnestly, clasping her hands and pressing them tightly over her heart.

"Oh, Señor Philip, how unhappy am I if I have made you think me so wicked. Who was it that saved me from death in the desert? Who was it that brought me over the many weary miles to his people? I hate you? Oh! Señor, no, no."



And she pressed her hands suddenly to her face, and broke into sobs.

"I am a brute," said Philip in disgust with himself; "I am a clumsy brute, Nawona. There, there, little one." He attempted to remove her hands, but Nawona wept all the more freely.

"Poor little girl," said Philip, "Stop! stop! or by Jove, I'll jump into the water and drown myself."

This brought Nawona's hands down at once, and she looked at him through her tears with terror.

"Señor!" she cried, but Philip could stand no more. He gathered her into his arms and kissed the tear-stained face, the curling hair, the slender hands. "Nawona, wild rose of the desert," he whispered,

"I am sick with loving you. All these long days and nights I have so hungered to hold you here that I must just this once, even if you should hate me for doing so. Oh, Nawona, I love you, I love you. Surely your heart tells you what love is, though you know nothing of the ways of the world; love is the way of life."

Nawona hid her face against him and wept again.

"Oh, little Nawona," Philip pleaded, "I have grieved and frightened you, and now you weep and hide your face from me. But weep there, little one, and I wish that all your sorrows all your life might be wept out always here upon my heart, but I know whom you love, Nawona, and he is a better man than myself, nobler in every way and worthy."

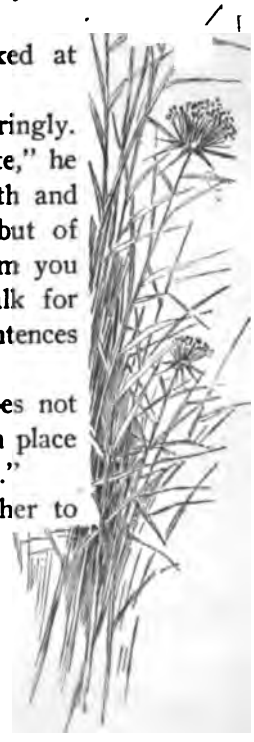
At this Nawona raised her head and looked at Philip.

"Of whom does Señor speak?" she said wonderingly.

" 'Of whom does he speak,' you little coquette," he said almost angrily, holding her at arm's length and gazing into her wet eyes. "Of whom else but of El Estranjero? You are his shadow. To him you flee if I but touch your hand; to him you talk for hours, when to me you give only the shortest sentences with downcast eyes."

"Surely," Nawona answered, "the Señor does not think that I love El Estranjero other than as in place of the father that lies buried in the desert sand."

"Nawona!" cried Philip, joyfully, drawing her to him again, "is that the truth?"



"Did I not tell the Señor that Nawona speaks always truly?"

"Then, Nawona, tell me instantly what you think of me," cried the impetuous Philip.

The girl cast down her eyes, a rosy blush stealing to her temples.

"Speak to me, Nawona."

Still she said nothing, but now she struggled to free herself from him.

"Let me go, Señor," she almost whispered.

Philip grew white now and his voice was almost solemn.

"Nawona," he said, lifting her face so that she was compelled to look at him, "do you think you could love me?"

Still no answer.

"Tell me, Nawona, Yes or No?"

"But, Señor, Señorita Alice?"

"Well, what of Alice?"

"Have I not seen you kiss her and hold her as one holds a sweetheart?"

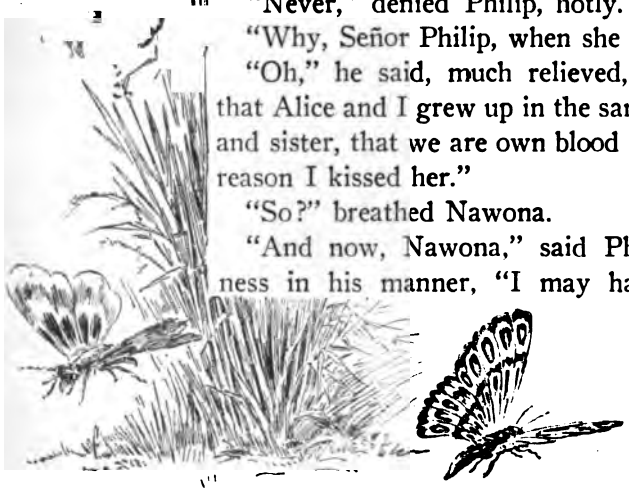
"Never," denied Philip, hotly.

"Why, Señor Philip, when she came the first time!"

"Oh," he said, much relieved, "do you not know that Alice and I grew up in the same house like brother and sister, that we are own blood cousins? That's the reason I kissed her."

"So?" breathed Nawona.

"And now, Nawona," said Philip, a new seriousness in his manner, "I may have taken an unfair



advantage of you; I presume I have. You will see many men, many who are better looking and better in every way than I am. It was wrong of me to talk to you as I have, and I am ashamed of myself. I will wait until you see others. I will give you time to know yourself. Forgive me, Nawona. Yes, you may go." And he released her and turned away gloomily.

He thought she had gone, and sinking down upon the grass was staring into the water. Suddenly he felt a breath upon his cheek, then Nawona's blushing face was bent to his, her red lips pressed his forehead.

"Philip," she breathed softly, "if I should see all the world of men, I should love only you." Before he could say a word or raise his hand to stay her, she was speeding back to the camp.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE LAST NIGHT IN CAMP

Alice was sound asleep when Nawona reached the camp, and the girl sat down demurely, glad that her kindly eyes were not on the alert to notice her excitement. Sitting there, her cheeks gradually cooled and her pulses steadied, so that when Alice, after a half hour, sleepily opened her eyes, yawned, and sat up, Nawona could smile at her with all her usual composure.

Alice wondered what Philip had said to the girl, but had no suspicion of the real state of things. Philip and Nawona each by a tacit agreement, made in a swift glance as they sat down to partake of the viands Jose had prepared, had agreed to keep their secret. Philip had looked questioningly toward Alice, but Nawona had shaken her head slightly, and Philip understood. This was to be their own sweet secret, cherished together and kept from others.

With a lover's selfishness, he quite forgot his suspicions that Alice loved El Estranjero, and that a word from him might straighten the tangle in her mind. He had thought only of himself and Nawona, and his thoughts lent wings of joy to his feet as he toiled over the trail that afternoon.

At sunset they reached the first plateau above the plain. Philip was in the van and the others following,

Indian file. The valley below lay stretched out before them in all its beauty. From this point the mountains could be seen from the foot of Old Baldy to the snow-covered top of San Jacinto, while to the west, in the peaceful glow and under the magic touch of the setting sun, lay the Pacific Ocean.

As they gazed upon this scene of loveliness, all were impressed as never before with a sense of gratitude that they had been permitted to live in a country of such surpassing grandeur. Best of all were these gray old mountains, whose summits pierced the sky, standing as a steady bulwark between desert and valley, guarding the beauty of the one from the blighting breath of the other.

As night came on, the travelers turned reluctantly away from this entrancing scene to seek a convenient place for their camp, and in a short time the horses were picketed and the party assembled about the camp fire.

Alice's mind was full of the beauty of that day's journey. She thought of the lights and shadows cast by the afternoon sun beneath the oaks and pines, with all the varying tints of the forest scene, and these blending together in her pleasing reverie made a picture never to be forgotten.

"Is there any one," she thought, "who has partaken of the tonic of an outdoor life in these beautiful mountains who is ever perfectly contented to again assume the duties and obligations demanded by society?

I, for one, would much rather listen to these whispering pines than to hear the most ravishing music."

This was their very last night; after to-morrow, perhaps, everything would be different. Their little company had been ideally congenial, they had come so close to one another's souls in this wilderness, but to-morrow—

"Daddy," Alice said, putting her arms about her father, and leaning upon his breast, as he sat by the fire after supper, "Daddy, let's live up here in the woods all the time."

"Why, Lassie, what an idea!"

"Yes, Daddy, let's stay up here and be happy, and not go down there in the valley where we have to sleep under roofs and eat at tables, and—" she laughed as she looked down at her soiled and crumpled riding dress, "and wear clothes. Daddy, I've never been so happy before in all my life. Let's stay up here in the woods."

"I am glad you've enjoyed it, Lassie. By rights you should have had all sorts of trials, and should have been sorry a thousand times that you did not stay at home, as Daddy said you must." And he pinched her ear playfully.

"Well, this night must be a happy one, the very best of all. Daddy, you trot out the best story you know, and to-night," she playfully menaced him with her slender forefinger, "to-night, Señor Daddy, the story must be one that none of us has ever before heard."

"Dear me, what a dragon of a daughter," laughed her father. Then he cudgeled his brain. "Ah, I have it, but I can't tell you the story till Jôse gets through."

They sat chatting about the fire till Jose, having finished his task, took his blanket a couple of hundred feet away, near where the horses were picketed, and lay down for the night.

"Now, Daddy, begin," said Alice, and Holcomb related the following:

"Do you see that clump of trees at the point of the hill over there?"

They all looked and confessed they could see it.

"Well, about fifteen years ago, I heard that Seth Holbrook had been hurt in a mine accident, and I was riding up to see him. It was nearly dark when I reached that point, and I quickened my pace into a canter. At that moment a sharp report rang out on the still night air, and a bullet whizzed so close to me that it chipped a piece from the pommel of my saddle. Frightened by the report or irritated by the touch of the spur, Black Bess took the bit between her teeth and bolted toward the mountain. It was some minutes before I could pull her down to a respectable canter, and by that time I had reached Holbrook's cabin. I found him suffering with a badly sprained ankle, some scalp wounds, and other minor bruises, but with no serious injuries. Convinced that he would be out in a few days, I mounted my horse, feeling comfortable in the thought that I would yet get home in time for a good night's rest. The incident of the rifle shot had

almost passed out of my mind before I again reached the point where it had occurred. There remained in my mind only a feeling of curiosity to know who had fired the shot, and the reason for the action.

"I slowed up to a walk as I passed the clump of trees, and was about to quicken my pace to a gallop when I thought I heard a groan. I stopped a moment and listened intently, at the same time drawing my revolver, ready to defend myself if need be.

"That instant I heard another groan, and this time it was unmistakable, and sounded as though it came from a person in distress. I located the sound as coming from the foot of a dead pine tree standing about one hundred feet from the road opposite where I had stopped. The shadow of the hill was over the ground about the tree, and I could see nothing at all. My first thought was to ride on, as it seemed to me that the person who fired the shot might be trying to decoy me from the road for the purpose of robbery; or it might be Indians.

"On second thought, however, I determined to investigate this strange proceeding, as my feelings would not allow me to go home without at least attempting to succor some one who might be in distress.

"I started on as though going home, riding about thirty or forty rods before I drew rein; then I tied my horse behind a little clump of bushes, and taking my revolver in my right hand, crept carefully along in the shadow toward the place where I had heard the groaning, stopping every few feet to listen for foot-

steps. I was determined not to be caught in any trap or ambush, and was consequently exceedingly alert for anything that I might see or, more likely, hear, as it was now quite dark.

"I soon came near enough again to hear the groaning, and moving still more quietly and carefully, I came within sight of some one lying on the ground, who appeared to be badly hurt and wholly unable to move. He had evidently heard me coming even before I could see him, for he spoke to me almost before I made out what he was, and begged me to help him. He spoke to me as a Mestizo and the substance of what he said I remember very well.

" 'I don't know who you are,' he said, in a tremulous and weak voice, 'but I have fallen from this tree, and have broken my leg, and I think I have broken my back. Oh, God! I have suffered terribly lying here; won't you help me, stranger?'

" 'Who are you?' I asked, 'and how came you in this plight?'

" 'For heaven's sake help me out of this first, and I will tell you everything afterwards. I can't live many hours and I suffer so; help me, for Christ's sake.'

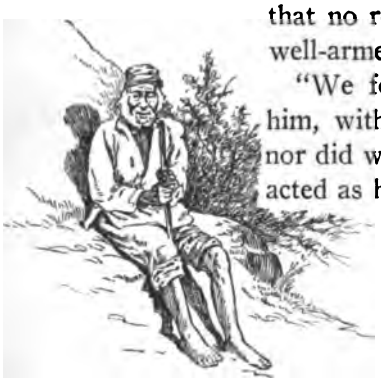
"I told him to lie still, and I would try to assist him. I started back toward my horse with the thought in mind that I might be able to place him on my horse and in this manner get him to the pueblo. But upon reflection I concluded that this would be impossible with a man so badly injured as he seemed to be, and before reaching my horse I had determined to ride

straight to the village and get assistance. All of the way I was turning over the events of the evening and trying to arrive at some conclusion about this wounded man, wondering if it were really he who had fired the shot, and how he happened to be up in the tree. In this way my mind was busy in speculations until I arrived in front of a house. Here I found assistance and made preparations to return to the aid of the wounded man.

"We procured a spring wagon that would ride as comfortably as any that could be found in the pueblo, and placing bed springs in the bottom of the wagon and a mattress and some bed quilts on top of them, I got a doctor to bring his surgical instruments and we drove back hurriedly for the wounded man.

"There was no doubt that the man was badly hurt and suffering terrible pain, but was he a criminal with criminal intent frustrated by some accident, and did he have accomplices against whom we must guard ourselves?

"These and other questions we asked ourselves but could not reply to them. While I had been somewhat nervous when alone, I had no such feeling in the company of these tried and trusty men and felt sure that no robber or band of robbers would attack three well-armed men, fully on their guard.



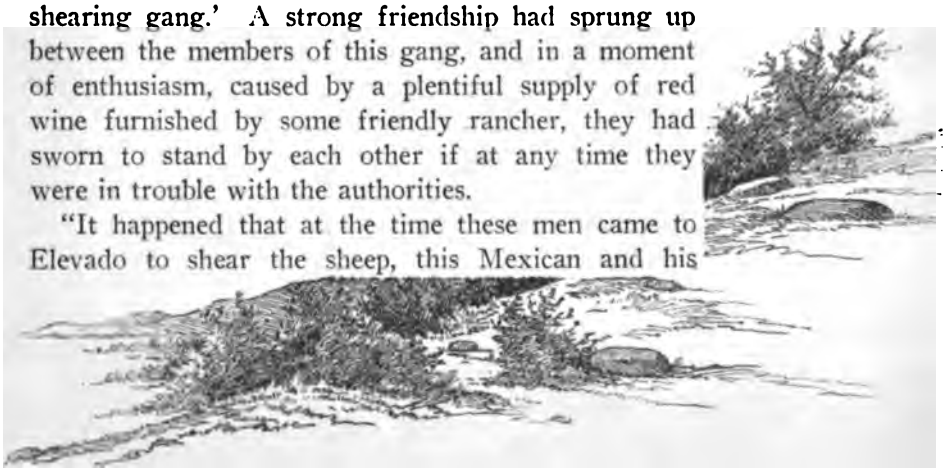
"We found the Mexican exactly where I had left him, with no indication that he had moved an inch, nor did we get trace of any other man who might have acted as his accomplice.

"We lifted him into the wagon as carefully as we could, but he suffered terrible agony until he fainted. This period of fainting lasted until we had nearly reached the pueblo, and it was a great relief to us when we were not obliged to witness his intense suffering.

"After reaching home and placing our patient in bed, I was glad to go to bed myself and take a little rest, as I had passed through a very strenuous day in more ways than one, and had not had a wink of sleep the night before.

"Weeks afterward, when the Mexican had sufficiently recovered to converse on the subject, I asked him the cause of his fall from the tree, and was a good deal surprised at the story he told me.

"It seems that the year previous he was one of a band of sheep shearers that made it a business to go from place to place and shear sheep belonging to the ranchers in that neighborhood. This occupation had been followed so long that these men had become expert in the work, and, as I have stated, traveled from place to place in company, and were known as 'the shearing gang.' A strong friendship had sprung up between the members of this gang, and in a moment of enthusiasm, caused by a plentiful supply of red wine furnished by some friendly rancher, they had sworn to stand by each other if at any time they were in trouble with the authorities.



"It happened that at the time these men came to Elevado to shear the sheep, this Mexican and his

brother had come with them, and engaged in that work. The brother got into some trouble with a tipsy half-breed Indian and it ended by his striking the Indian with his dirk knife. He was immediately put under arrest and given a preliminary examination. I happened to be the magistrate before whom the case was brought, and as the prosecution had made a good showing, I bound this man over to the grand jury.

"By this time the band of sheep shearers had gone to some other point for work, but had left the Mexican to assist his brother to regain his freedom. Laboring under the crazy notion that my death would in some way bring about the release of his imprisoned brother, he conceived the idea of waylaying and disposing of me.

"Learning in some way that I was to pay a visit to the prospector, he had gone to the point that I have shown you, and climbing into that tree, fired at me, and, as I have already said, came very near 'getting me.' His fall was, of course, accidental, but it made a change in the man's whole nature. All his idea of revenge was gone, and his feeling toward me was changed from one of resentment to one of respect, and finally to that of affection. I took him into my service at home as soon as he was able to work, and he has been with me ever since."

"You don't mean Jose, do you, Father?" asked Alice. "I have never heard you mention it before, and did not dream while you were relating the story that it was Jose."

"Well, it is true that Jose was the Mexican, but it seemed better that the story should not be known, at that time at any rate, and we kept it to ourselves. He has been a faithful and affectionate servant, and we have all learned to love him very much."

"What became of his brother?" asked Philip.

"He was found guilty of assault and battery only, although the Indian died, and he served a jail sentence of one year," was Holcomb's reply.

CHAPTER XXXVI

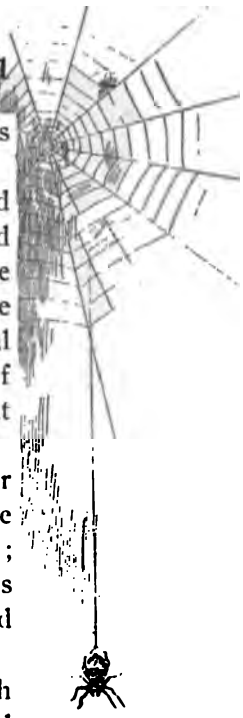
IN THE VALLEY

It was a perfect morning, and our travelers lingered in this beautiful spot, loath to leave the mountains. Often they stayed their steps to view the inspiring panorama of hill and dale, mountain and valley, spread out before them.

The hearts of Philip and Nawona sang like the birds. The shy and happy glances of the girl seldom sought those of her lover, so new was her revelation of love, and so fearful was she that she might have been overbold, that she kept at Alice's side, and perversely directed her conversation toward any one rather than Philip.

The young man, however, understood her bashfulness, and endured her caprice, knowing in that long day's journey he would have many occasions for a word or a pressure of the little hand.

It was late afternoon when the cavalcade drew rein before the house built around three sides of a square. The day had been one of delight. The fragrance of the chaparral and sage filled the air, now blowing cool and sweet from the ocean. October was waning to its close. Fleecy white clouds floating in the sky gave promise of the vivifying rains that soon would call forth the verdure from the brown bosom of the



earth, when the mountains would wrap their mantles of snow about them.

Francesca and Juan welcomed them at the door, and Alice led Nawona into the house. Reared as she had been among savage surroundings, this home in the valley was a revelation to the girl, the wooden house with its many rooms a palace, the piano a magical instrument, the pictures upon the wall undreamed of beauty, the comfort and order so strange to her that she felt lost and bewildered.

Philip led her from room to room, showing her this thing and that and explaining their uses, while Alice gave Francesca directions in domestic matters; but the girl was speechless and amazed, and at last, as they stood again in the simple living room, she turned toward Philip a grieved and puzzled face.

"Oh, Señor," she said, "I am not fit to live in such a wonderful house. I am so clumsy and untaught and out of place."

The tears were in her eyes and her lips were quivering. Philip put his arms around her and gently drew her toward him.

"Nawona, my beloved," he said softly, "in a week you will be as much at home in this house as though you had always been accustomed to these things. Your home, dear one, is here upon my heart, and in a little while we two will build a nest and mate, and I will sing like the mocking bird out there, from the very gladness of our love. Look up, little maid, and take courage."

She raised her eyes to his, and their lips met in a long kiss of innocent love, and Alice, who came through the door at the moment, stopped, and for an instant was dumb with astonishment at what she saw. Then she flew to Philip and laid her hand upon his shoulder.

"I'd just like you to explain yourself," she said, giving him a little shake.

He dropped one arm which was wrapped about Nawona, and took Alice too in his embrace.

"Do you really think," he said, "that I need to make an explanation?"

Nawona was standing with downcast eyes, her face suffused with blushes.

"Oh, Philip!" she whispered.

"Yes," laughed Alice, "'Oh, Philip!' I see just how it is. You little brown bird," she said, throwing her arms about Nawona's neck and kissing her heartily. "I am so glad! So glad! Now, Mr. Philip, I shall take her away and I shall be a very dragon of a chaperon. You shall not monopolize her, sir, and shall be the most discreet of lovers, for Nawona has much to learn before she can be given to you, and I am not going to have her education interfered with by too much philandering."

Alice laughed at the consternation with which Philip heard this declaration, but she nevertheless took the young girl's hand and led her to her own room.

The muslin curtains, the white bed, the easy chairs with their covers of flowered chintz, and the trifles

scattered about that girls love, filled Nawona with such amazement that when Alice pushed one of the chairs forward she sat down upon the floor instead.

"No, Señorita, I am not fit," she protested, with a gesture toward her deer-skin garments, now sadly frayed and soiled.

"Nawona," said Alice, "I am no longer Señorita to you. I am Alice, your dear sister," and she knelt on the floor beside her, and slipped an arm about her waist. "I love you very much, Nawona, and I am so glad that you care for Philip. He told me about his love for you the very first day I came to camp, and I was afraid that he was to suffer, for I thought you had set your heart upon another."

Nawona smiled into her eyes.

"And, oh, Alice, how unhappy was I, for I thought Philip loved you."

"So he does, as a sister," Alice said. "And now, Nawona, you just rest here," tucking some cushions behind the girl's shoulders, "and in a few minutes I shall make you over, so you will not know yourself."

Alice had, adjoining her bedroom, a luxury quite unusual in those days of the pueblo, a tiny bathroom, with a tin bathtub, painted white, and plain but comfortable fittings. She left the door ajar as she turned on the water, and the marvel of Nawona on hearing the sound of flowing water in the house was so great that she tiptoed to the door to see it; then returned to her cushions, wondering at this new piece of magic.

Imagine your own feelings on being suddenly

transported from the life of the wilderness to that of civilization—even the civilization of that day, which we now regard as primitive—and you may gain some idea of the feelings and emotions of the young white girl now restored to her own proper surroundings.

She looked at the dressing table, with its array of silver brushes and articles of the toilet, with the curiosity of a little child, and as she turned she caught a glimpse of herself in a mirror, that made her look about her quickly, thinking there was some little brown maid standing behind the dressing case.

Then she arose and softly went forward. The image moved as she moved, smiled when she smiled, stretched forth its hand as she stretched forth hers. It was amusing to watch her, as Alice was doing from a crack of the door, as she gestured and postured. She had seen tiny mirrors that had been bartered with the traders, but nothing like this, that gave a view of the whole body. True, many a time she had seen her image in pool and stream, but it was not the perfect living, breathing self like this.

Alice gave her plenty of time to examine the different articles in the room. At last when she had touched the soft chairs with her hands to note their springiness and the unreality of the flowers upon their covers, when she had turned the brushes about and gazed curiously at books and pictures, she sunk down again upon the carpeted floor, and with a luxurious sigh of content, settled herself among the cushions. Alice now came out, shining and sweet from her bath.

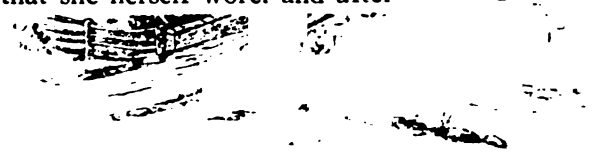
A loose gown of deep rose color trailed about her, and her long golden hair was unbound. She stood a moment looking down upon the little brown face upturned to hers.

"Oh, Alice!" cried Nawona, clasping her hands in delight, "you are most beautiful and splendid. I did not think any woman could ever look like that."

"Nawona, come here, and I will show you something." She led the way into the bathroom. "See, now I have turned on the water; wait, and the tub will soon be full."

When the tub was filled, she said: "Now, little girl, off with your clothes. There is soap and here is a brush. Now rub the soap thus upon the brush, and scrub every inch of that little person of yours. Then when you are through, and are clean and fresh, dry yourself well with the towels, and put this on," holding up a long loose robe the color and shape of the one she wore, "and come out to me and I will make you beautiful."

While Nawona was carrying out these directions, Alice arranged her hair, and dressed herself in a soft gray woolen house gown, with a band of lace at her neck and wrists. From out her store of dresses, she selected one that she had worn at school when she was a girl of fourteen. This, she thought, would fit the slender Nawona to perfection. It was pale blue, made with the utmost simplicity, and without the least garnishing. At the neck and wrists Alice basted a soft strip of lace like that she herself wore. and after



selecting undergarments that she had worn when the dress fitted her, and that had long lain done up in lavender, she took from the drawer of her dresser a wide silk ribbon the color of the dress, as a sash for the waist, and a narrower ribbon of the same hue as a snood for Nawona's brown hair, and waited in some impatience for the girl's appearance.

As Nawona was astonished at Alice's beauty, so the wonder of the quaint and dainty loveliness of this maiden of the wild grew upon Alice as she robed her from head to foot.

When she had finished and Nawona stood before her, the long curling brown hair had been combed and brushed and fell in soft waves almost to her slender waist. Alice parted it in the middle, and bound it with a blue ribbon. Over the collar of fair white lace, the beautiful rose-tinted brown face, with its full red lips, and the clear azure of the long-lashed eyes, was like some old-time picture.

"Oh, Nawona, you darling, step out here into the full light and look at yourself," she cried.

As Nawona came forward, Alice gave a little cry of dismay. Nawona stopped in surprise, and glanced at her inquiringly.

"Your feet," cried Alice, "Oh, Nawona, your feet!"

Nawona stuck one of her white feet out from under the blue gown.

"Yes, Alice, my feet. They are all right, see."

"But you must have shoes and stockings," Alice cried, "I had quite forgotten them."

She dived into the trunk from which she had taken the other garments, and after some delving into its depths, brought out a pair of little black slippers, with shining steel buckles, and some blue silk stockings.

"Sit down here, my child," she laughed, "and I will show you how to wear civilized foot coverings."

In a few minutes the toilet was completed, and Alice, full of glee over the surprise in store for Philip, said:

"Now wait here, Nawona, and when you hear me whistle, then come."

Philip was on the veranda.

"Turn your back to the door, sir, this minute," she called to him. Instinctively he obeyed.

"Now you stand there and look straight ahead." Then she whistled, and as Nawona appeared in the doorway, she turned Philip about.

He stood staring and bewildered for a minute, gazing at the lovely picture, and then taking Nawona's hands in his led her to the seat in the patio under the rose bush, and there Alice left them together in the dusk.

CHAPTER XXXVII

PHILOSOPHY BY THE WAY

Neither El Estranjero nor Mr. Holcomb appeared at the supper table, and Alice found that Gardiner had been waiting at the ranch for a couple of days for their return, and that he desired to make some sort of a journey upon which he wished to consult them.

It was quite dark, when her father and El Estranjero appeared upon the veranda. Much to her surprise El Estranjero still wore the clothes he used for mountain travel. He had his gun in his hand, and his full knapsack upon his back.

Nawona sat beside Alice, and in the dusk her transformation did not strike Estranjero as it had Philip, in fact, he hardly noticed it. Alice's former mood of gayety had passed, and now, sad and silent, she was looking out into the night. Philip was busied unrolling and putting away the articles that had been in his pack upon the journey just ended.

At the moment Estranjero appeared, Juan came around the corner of the house leading the burro that the Indians had found upon the desert. Upon the animal's back was a huge pack, and it was followed by a horse, similarly packed, and then Gardiner came from the shadows, his gun in his hand, and stood at the foot of the steps as if waiting for some one.

As he approached Mr. Holcomb was speaking earnestly to El Estranjero. "Juan can go with you," he was saying, "and if anything should happen and you need assistance of any kind from the valley, he can be sent back with news." Alice rose to her feet. So he was going away again, this time apparently on another long and dangerous journey. What could it be? But El Estranjero was speaking.

"I am sure we shall need no help, but we are glad to have Juan. We certainly will return before Christmas at the very longest."

"Christmas," Alice was saying to herself in dismay, as she pressed her hands over her heart. "He was to be gone, then, for two months. Would he go without a word!"

Nawona was sorry, now, that she had not told El Estranjero her secret, but still, when he came back it would be time. He bent and kissed her on the forehead, as if it were the most natural thing in the world to do.

"Good-bye, Nawona," he said, "I expect you to be quite an elegant young lady by the time I come back. Good-bye, Alice." She laid her cold and nerveless hand in his and said farewell in a voice so low he hardly heard it.

"Oh, Alice, Alice," El Estranjero said to himself. "Why are you so cold to me? What have I done that you should hate me? I know you love Philip, but why should you treat me as though I were the dirt beneath your feet?"

"Oh, Estranjero," said Alice's heart, "how shall I bear the agony of these long days and nights, when you are gone to who knows what danger, and maybe death?"

"Come," cried Gardiner, "I want to be out of the valley before the moon rises. We can't afford to have any one following us."

Estranjero said a hasty word of good-bye to Philip, and then the night swallowed him and his companions.

"Where are they going?" asked Philip.

"My boy," was Holcomb's reply, "this is to be a secret expedition, and I warn you all to say nothing about it. Gardiner learned from a prospector that he found dying on the mountain, with whom he staid till the last and later buried, of a rich gold mine in the Indian country. He and El Estranjero are going, with Juan, to locate the mine. Gardiner has been here ready and waiting for two days. He wanted me to go, too, but I grub-staked El Señor and remained at home, for I am tired with this journey and have many things to attend to here."

Thus El Estranjero, but an hour returned from his campaign in the mountains, was again upon his way into the wilderness. He had been glad of this opportunity to leave the pueblo for a time. Perhaps before his return he could conquer this weakness for Alice, that was robbing his nights of rest and his days of peace. By the time he returned, perhaps, she and Philip would be married, and knowing that she was lost to him beyond recall, and his heart-wound healed

a little by time and separation from her, he could look life in the face more bravely.

Gardiner and Juan were in high spirits as they commenced the long tramp which had for its object a purpose so uncertain and dangerous that it partook of the nature of an adventure, and was therefore none the less attractive to these hardy and brave souls.

As they journeyed along the road to the mountains they passed the battle ground where in the darkness of the night, weeks before, had taken place the struggle between the whites and the Indians. They camped upon the first plateau, and the next morning, under the influence of a perfect day all went on with light hearts.

As they trudged along together, Gardiner, who was something of a philosopher, made conversation with El Estranjero.

"I tell you what, Señor," he said, "I was born three hundred years too late. If I had been born at the right time, I could have lived a life in the wilderness, like Robin Hood, and have been happy."

Estranjero smiled. "I should not care to be a Robin Hood any where else but in Southern California, the paradise of the world."

Gardiner pondered this a moment and then with an assenting nod continued.

"I shall never be able to understand how so many people can live in large cities without room to breathe, rubbing elbows with arrogant wealth on the one side and distressing poverty on the other, when they can breathe the pure atmosphere of a country like this,

with everything to charm the senses and promote health and vigor."

"We may secure some arrogant wealth ourselves, if we have good luck," said Estranjero, thinking at the same instant that if Alice should turn a kindly ear to him, if Alice only were heart-free, what wealth, such as they thought to secure, might mean to him.

"I do not often talk much about an out-door life," Estranjero continued, "for the reason that I am conscious of no other and know little of the life of a crowded city. Anything else but the freedom of these grand old mountains and this wide spreading desert would be a prison to me, yet civilization surely has its advantage."

"Advantages," said Gardiner with scorn. "I would not change my own way of living if I could gain all the advantages and comforts of a life of luxury in the city. It seems to me that those living there pay too much for what they get. If we were to go right on living forever, and could use the advantages gained by strife and hurry, then I could understand the benefits of such a life. But existence here is too short for such a struggle and we cannot carry the hard-won advantages away with us. Now look at Juan there. Like all the Indians of his kind, he lives in a thriftless sort of way with no concern for the morrow, but enjoying every moment of the present and is not torn, from the cradle to the grave, with the greed and passion of high life."

"Juan," called Estranjero to the Indian who was

plodding beside the burro. "Juan, what do you want most in the world?" Juan looked at the speaker in some perplexity, as he meditatively scratched his head.

"A cigarette, Señor," he answered.

"Nothing else?"

"Nothing, Señor, I am not hungry."

"Ah," said the philosopher, as they resumed their march. "You see I am right. The Indian's heedlessness often makes him go hungry, but hunger gives him an appetite for what he does get. But they are like the leaves falling from the trees before the frosts of winter. The onward rush of the white man is sweeping them to the happy hunting ground and in a few years they will be gone and the places that know them now will know them no more forever."

"I suppose they will enjoy their endless sleep, too," smiled El Estranjero, "for next to smoking and eating, Juan loves sleeping most, that's true, isn't it, amigo?"

"Yes, Señor," replied the Indian with a grin.

The philosopher was not to be diverted.

"I believe," he proceeded, "that there is a happy medium which the Indian might attain, and he would then enjoy the benefits of both savage and civilized life. I am sure the frontiersman, like myself, gets more out of life than does either the Indian or the city-bred man. Certainly the city man would enjoy much better health, and a chance of much longer life, if his lines were cast in nature's home."

Like Holcomb, Gardiner was a college graduate

and the purity of his English did not distinguish him above many of the men of the mountains and isolated pueblos. While this part of the Southwest attracted its quota of the rougher element whose language is the vernacular of the popular western story, it had its large sprinkling of men of the schools, who found in the beauty of the country and the perfection of the climate attractions stronger than those of academic pursuits.

El Estranjero, though with no knowledge of his past, had brought into his new life, strangely enough, a full recollection of the books he had read, and his speech showed that he, too, had known the refining influence of a thorough education. Judging from their uncouth dress and rugged appearance, a chance passer-by might have thought these men under-bred or ignorant, but a single sentence spoken by either showed their native courtesy and the training they had received. They were congenial companions, therefore, and Estranjero looked forward with pleasure to spending these months in the wilderness with the talkative man whose quaint philosophy always interested him.

As they made their way upward Gardiner's flow of talk whiled away the hours. When they halted to rest and partake of food, eaten with a relish known only by those who have earned the right to enjoyment by exercise in the open air, Gardiner still talked, and when, lounging at night beside their fire in the pine forest, where the needles made a bed as soft and springy as a bed of down, while they watched the

smoke curling from their pipes and listened to the soughing wind as it swayed and caressed the fragrant pines that raised their lofty heads into the dark blue of the night sky, Gardiner's voice babbled on like the mountain brook. Estranjero listened dreamily, sometimes losing it altogether as his thoughts turned back to the home he had left and the woman he loved, and sometimes putting in a word to start again the current of his companion's thoughts, for he liked to hear him, and Gardiner liked equally to be heard.

The three men pushed rapidly across the mountains, occasionally stopping to fish in some clear stream where the trout were abundant, or to hunt deer and to make jerky for future use. They traversed the mountains and struck across the desert, unerringly piloted by Juan, and after days and weeks of traveling found themselves in the Pah-Ute country, where Gardiner expected to locate the ledge described by the prospector.

As they were to spend some months in the wilderness here, they pitched their camp at the foot of a rocky cliff that in some prehistoric time had been utilized as the habitation of a tribe of cliff-dwellers, and settled themselves to begin their search.

They built a wickiup of leaves and branches, in the Indian fashion, and made themselves comfortable. The Pah-Utes, who now knew of the extinction of the flower of their tribe, had retired into the depths of their forest fastness, and there was no apprehension from them. Indeed, the Pah-Utes were in deadly

fear of their old enemy, the Apaches, and secreted themselves like the other wild things of the wood, hoping to escape from their fierce foes.

As cold weather came on, the wickiup was found to be insufficient shelter against the inclemency of the approaching season, and they determined to seek better quarters or improve these they had already constructed. Their brush house backed against the loosely laid wall of rock which had been the front of the long-ruined cliff dwelling. By rebuilding this wall and clearing the rubbish away behind it, they managed to reconstruct a very respectable abode, which they flattered themselves did no great discredit to their cliff-dwelling predecessors.

In the rubbish which was piled deep upon the floor of this rocky apartment, they found a number of utensils that must have been the property of the former dwellers of the ancient flat. The most of these were evidently cooking pots and vessels for the storage of provisions and water. There were also among them, deep down in the debris, several images that might have been objects of worship.

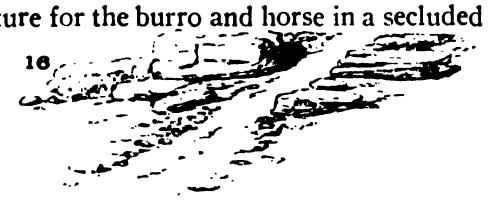
By using the stone in the old wall, and blue clay for mortar to relay it, their dwelling was made tight and weather-proof, the doorway being the only entrance for light and air. In one corner of the chamber was a recess which had evidently been used for a fireplace and for cooking, as the wall was still thick with soot. A crevice in the upper wall had served as a vent for the smoke. Taken altogether, there was very little

lacking to make this dwelling much more comfortable than many tenement houses in some of the larger eastern cities.

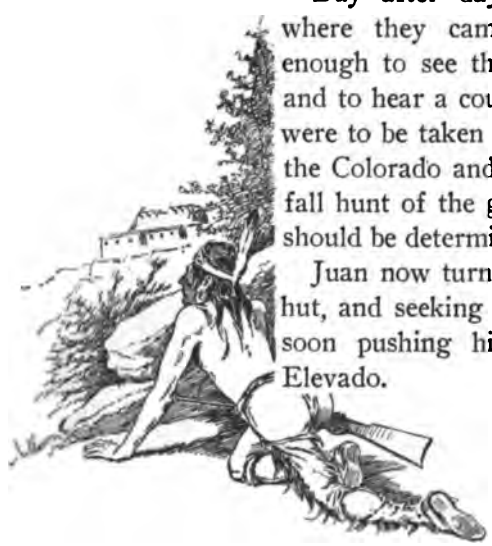
They were all sufficiently well acquainted with the excessive cold of the winter here, to make abundant preparation for the freezing weather. For days they gathered fuel and heaped it high in their abode. They hunted deer and bear meat and fished in the streams, dried their game and packed it in the vessels found in the house, made snowshoes, so they might be prepared for a sudden storm, and then set out in earnest to prospect for the mine.

It was drawing on toward the close of a cold, bright day, about a week after the completion of the house, that Estranjero and Gardiner, with a fine fat buck they had killed lying at their feet, were smoking their pipes by the door of their house. Juan had taken his fishing rod and was fishing in the stream, hidden by a dense clump of willows, when suddenly he heard the terrible war cry of the Apaches, and crouching in the shelter of his covert, from which he could view the camp, saw to his horror, Estranjero and Gardiner struggling in the grasp of a half score of Indians, who soon bound their arms behind them, and, after looting the house of all it contained, and searching about carefully, had evidently come to the conclusion that the two prospectors were alone.

Juan had long ago built a barrier across a green canyon about three miles from the hut, making a pasture for the burro and horse in a secluded little valley



where the grass was fresh and green. Luckily the Indian had his rifle and ammunition pouch with him, and surmising that the Apaches had not noted the pack saddles, which had been thrown into a thick clump of brush behind the hovel, Juan waited till the band was well on its way; then, with the stealth and cunning which made him the cleverest trailer in the whole valley, he set out in pursuit.



Day after day he followed the Apaches, noting where they camped at night, and at last got near enough to see that the prisoners were not ill treated and to hear a council talk from which he learned they were to be taken to an Apache village on the banks of the Colorado and there held until the return from the fall hunt of the great chief, Bull-face, when their fate should be determined.

Juan now turned back, made all haste to the ruined hut, and seeking his horse in the canyon pasture, was soon pushing his way by night and day towards Elevado.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

NAWONA AND FRANCESCA

Alice and Nawona spent long hours together as the autumn waned toward winter. Philip had bought his ranch and was busy building a home for himself and his bride-to-be. The trousseau must be fashioned, and this in itself was a matter of absorbing interest, and then there were lessons in English for Nawona and the thousand other things in which she was to be instructed. Alice was so painstaking, and Nawona so quick of apprehension, that in a few weeks all traces of her wild life disappeared.

Her love for Philip was a powerful stimulus to improvement and her innate refinement naturally caused her to adopt the ways of civilization. No elder sister could have been more tenderly loved than she and Philip loved Alice, and the keen delight that Alice took in receiving their confidence and advising them was marred only by the constant pain of her own unhappy love for El Estranjero.

In those weeks a new womanliness was born in Alice. Her solicitude for her father's comfort became more tender, and the expression upon her beautiful face, though it dimmed somewhat the brightness of her beauty, added to it an undefinable charm.

One day her father brought her a letter the contents of which caused her the greatest joy.

"Nawona," she called, "come and be happy with me. My dearest and kindest friend, Mrs. Anderson, who did so much for me when I was in Washington last year, is in Los Angeles, and best of all, her husband, Colonel Anderson, is stationed there. I shall soon see her, for she writes to ask me if it will be convenient for her to make me a visit. Shall we not have her at once? Would it not be fine if she could be here Christmas?"

Nawona blushed as she said, "Yes, Alice dear, it would indeed be fine. But tell me about her."

Christmas was the time the young lovers had chosen for their bridal, for in those days long engagements were not customary, and though Nawona was young she had no kindred to object to the ardor of her lover, and she looked forward with the greatest joy to the time when she and Philip would inhabit the nest he was building.

Alice rejoiced to have Mrs. Anderson's assistance and her sensible advice in the preparations for the household comfort of the young couple in their new home. She drew Nawona down beside her and said:

"Nawona, she is a white-haired, lovely lady, this friend of mine. She knew my mother when she was a little girl, and her husband has long been in the army. All of her relatives are army people. She has a brother who is a general, and one son in the army and another in the navy, and I don't know how many grandsons in West Point and Annapolis. She is just

the sort of a young-old lady that I want to be when I am spinster aunt to Philip's children."

Nawona laughed. "Alice, you will never be a spinster aunt to anybody's children. You are such a lovely lady, that if I were a man I would steal you and run away with you if I could not get you otherwise."

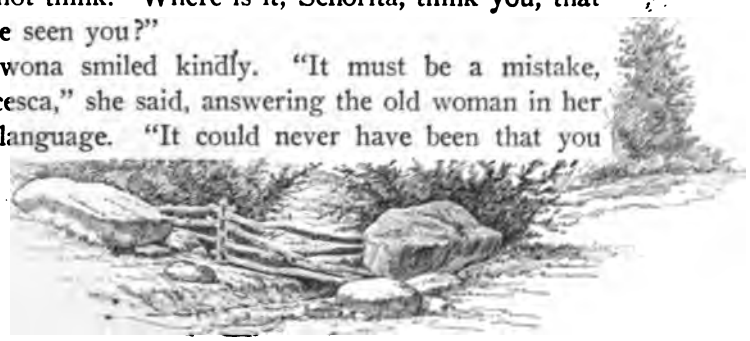
"Well," said Alice, "I will write Mrs. Anderson to come just as quickly as she can get here and stay as long as she possibly can, but at all events until after Christmas. We will go to Francesca now and plan the immediate fitting up of a room for her."

Francesca's attitude toward Nawona was a strange one. She would prepare especial dainties for her, take the greatest pains in every way to please her, and would scan her face with an almost painful anxiety, as if she were trying to read something there, or to solve some puzzle in her own mind.

To-day Alice left Nawona and Francesca in charge of the furnishing of the room for Mrs. Anderson, while she wrote her letter to her friend. Scarcely had they been left alone, before Francesca turned to Nawona and said in the Indian tongue:

"Señorita, your face to me is as one seen in a dream. I try to remember, but my head is dull and I cannot think. Where is it, Señorita, think you, that I have seen you?"

Nawona smiled kindly. "It must be a mistake, Francesca," she said, answering the old woman in her own language. "It could never have been that you



saw me before I came to this house, for I was never before here, and you were never with my people."

"But when you were a little girl, were you never here with your mother?"

It had not been thought best to tell Francesca and the people of the pueblo much concerning Nawona. The capture of white people by the Indians was not at all uncommon in those days; therefore the rescue of the girl, while it excited much interest, soon ceased to be a subject of conversation in the pueblo, and as Philip and Nawona were to make their home there, they considered it best that only such of her history as was already known through her rescue and return to the settlement, should be made public property.

"My mother was never here," answered Nawona.

"And is the Señorita's mother still living?" asked the Indian woman.

Nawona knew from the manner of the question that there was none of the idle curiosity here that was so repugnant to her. The anxious and earnest gaze of the old woman, her almost trembling eagerness to learn something about her, strangely impressed the young girl.

"No, Francesca, she died when I was a very little girl."

"Ah, she is dead," breathed Francesca. "How did she die, Señorita?"

"Among the Indians, Francesca. She was mad from the hour I remember her."

"Yes," said Francesca, "in the storm and rain you

awoke, and she was shrieking as an Indian would have scalped some man that she saw shot in the head and dead at her feet." Nawona stared at her with amazement.

"Oh, I know, I know," almost screamed Francesca. Nawona shrank from her in terror.

"You could not have known," she said.

"Listen," said the old woman, grasping her arm and speaking low and rapidly, with her face almost against that of the girl.

"It was night, the rain fell and the thunder, ah, the thunder was like the roaring of beasts, and the lightning blazed, and fear and death were abroad upon the mountain. There were wagons, many wagons, and the camp fire was quenched by the rain, and it was very dark. But all the sky was light for an instant with the lightning, and then there stole from behind the trees and rocks, Indians—Apaches and Utes."

The girl's eyes widened in horror, and she drew back from the strange old woman who was telling her this tale.

"Yes, there are Indians, Pah-Utes and Apaches, and they give their war cry, and men come from the wagons. They are stupid with sleep, and in the darkness cannot find their guns, and the Indians strike them down, men, women and children. Oh, Mother of God! they kill the little children! They dash their bodies against the rocks, and see, there is one, an Apache, who swings a babe by the heels, and its head is crushed against a tree before it can wail.

"But there against the rock is a woman. Her long brown hair is unbound. A child, hidden behind her, is sobbing in terror. And there is a man who has a hatchet in his hand. He strikes again and again as he stands before her and the little child to keep them from their enemies. He cuts one Indian through the head, and another, and another. Then he falls, and a tall Pah-Ute comes up and would scalp the dead white man, but another white man in gray is there. He is with the Indians and seems to command them. The woman raises her hands to him and speaks. He forbids the chief, for he is a chief, to take the scalp. It is all quiet now, and the Indians are dragging things from the wagons. They make a fire, they dance about it; but the Pah-Ute takes the little child upon his shoulder, he leads the woman away in the darkness. What then, Nawona, what then? I see no more."

Nawona knew that in some mysterious way the woman was reading the tale of her own capture by the Indians, but there were in the recital things she had not remembered and did not know. How did the woman know them, or how, indeed, did she know this story?

"Francesca," she cried in horror, "you were one of that murdering band, you were with them, how else could you know these things?"

"Nawona, I saw them in a picture of the Great Spirit. It was in the evening that I saw all this, long after it was past, and in this very room. Señorita Alice was a little girl then, but she still remembers

the time and how I shrieked and was afraid at what I saw. But now I know you were the little child, Señorita Nawona. Oh, the Virgin be thanked, you were the little child and are safe, and the Great Spirit has led you here. Now may my little white dove, my own dear Señorita, be happy!"

"What do you mean?" questioned Nawona.

But the old woman suddenly turned and went about her task, muttering to herself unintelligibly, and Nawona determined later to ask Alice the meaning of this mystery. In her heart Nawona still believed that Francesca had been with the band of murderers that had attacked the wagons when she and her mother were captured by the savages; but the old woman was a valued servant in the Holcomb house, and she felt that her own position as a guest and the recipient of so many benefits, bound her to be silent as to this incident in the career of the Indian woman, whom they all regarded with so much affection. That she saw the scene in a picture of the Great Spirit was of course a falsehood. That was said to mislead her, she felt certain, but she had no proof against the woman. She herself, was really almost a stranger to the Holcombs. If Francesca chose to deny the conversation, to which there had been no listeners, it would place Nawona herself in the position of falsifying and with apparent malice.

The girl considered all these things, and resolved to say nothing for the present, but from that day she avoided the old woman. She would take nothing

from her hand if she could help it, and never spoke to her except when necessity compelled it, and Alice, who noticed her manner, attributed it, not unnaturally, to dislike of Francesca because she was an Indian, and the fact that Nawona now wished to forget her wild life and all connected with it.

"The hearts of the young ladies were susceptible to uniforms." Page 247

"My dear," she said to Alice, "I want you to look me over and see if I will do."

"Do," cried Alice, "you look like some grand court dame."

"My husband likes this dress," replied her friend, "and to-morrow he will be gone, so I want to look the best I can for the sake of my lover."

"Here is another," Alice cried with a laugh, as Nawona timidly knocked at the door. "Come in, Wona, darling."

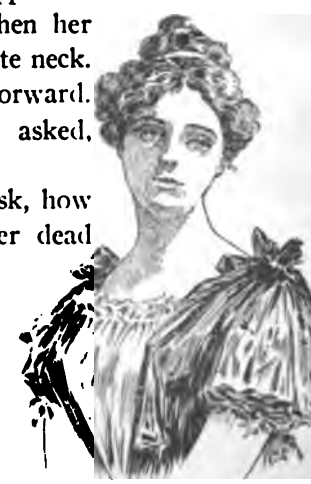
The girl entered, and Alice sprang up and embraced her. "You look just like a rose, Nawona, and Philip certainly is right when he calls you his 'Rose of the desert.' "

Nawona's gown was a soft and shimmering pink silk, made to show her rounded arms and plump neck. Her curls were gathered high upon her head and bound with a fillet of ribbon the same color as her dress. About her neck was a slender gold chain, a gift from her lover, and depending from this chain was the disk of gold taken from the breast of the dead Ute chief, its diamonds sparkling like raindrops in the sun.

Mrs. Anderson looked her over with approval. "My dear," she said, "Alice was right." Then her eyes fell upon the ornament upon the girl's white neck. She gasped a little, turned pale, and started forward.

"Where did you get that, Nawona?" she asked, pointing to the trinket.

Nawona told her the story of the golden disk, how she had seen the Ute chief take it from her dead



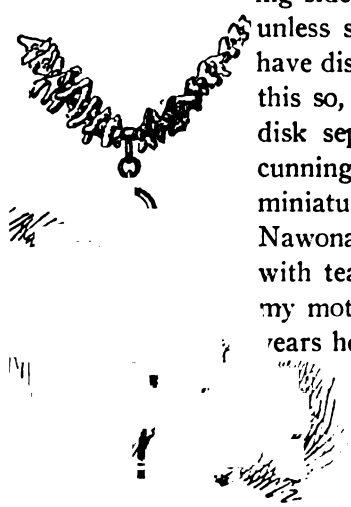
mother's bosom, how he had always thereafter worn it, and how Philip called it her dowry, and told her to take good care of it, for it might some day lead to the discovery of her kindred.

While she related this, Mrs. Anderson gazed at her with a new look upon her face. She had been told the girl's story and her heart had gone out to her from the first. When Nawona had finished giving her the history of the disk the lady said:

"Nawona, will you take it from your neck for a moment; I want to look at it closely."

The young girl unclasped the chain and handed the ornament to Mrs. Anderson. That lady looked it over, the tears standing in her eyes.

"Yes, it is the same," she said brokenly, "there can be no doubt. See, Alice, these diamonds form an old English G. Do you notice this center one? See, I will press it." She did so, and out from the side there was pushed the end of a little lever, made of the curving side of the disk, and so cunningly joined to it that unless she had known of its existence she could not have discovered it. "See again," she said, "I now raise this so, and press upon it." As she pressed, the little disk separated and opened, revealing that it was a cunningly contrived locket. In the locket were two miniatures, one of a woman whose face was so like Nawona's that Alice was not surprised when the girl, with tears running down her face, cried, "Oh, that is my mother, my own mother, and to think that all the years her face has been there and I have never seen it!



I have dreamed of it many times, but in my dreams her face was always sad, and her hair hung about her neck and she was weeping or moaning. But look, Alice, here is my mother as young as I am, and sweet, oh, so sweet!"

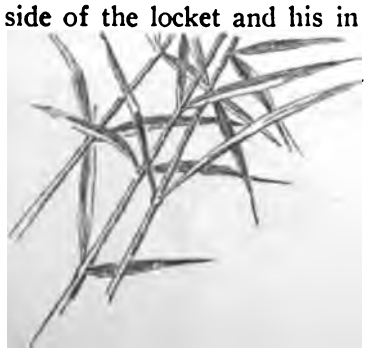
Alice took the locket and reverently gazed upon it. But who was that with curling brown hair, whose gray eyes looked out from the other side. This face was surely a familiar one. She pointed to it with an unspoken question upon her lips.

Mrs. Anderson, pale and trembling, again took the locket from Nawona and led her to a seat.

"My dear child," she said, "sit down, and then look at the picture of this man, and tell me if you can remember anything about him."

Nawona gazed long at the face. "Why, yes," she cried at last, "I used to call that man 'Pa-pa.' He once brought me a big doll with yellow hair. That is all I can remember, but I know it is the same man."

"Nawona, that man was your father. I knew him well from the time he was a little fellow in kilts, and I used to visit his mother in her fine old Virginia home. And this girl was Mary Carter. Her mother and I were roommates at school. I myself had this locket made as a wedding present for Mary when she married Joseph Gratton. She was seventeen then and he twenty. It was a love-match, and I knew nothing would please her more than a miniature of her young husband; so I had one painted and placed her picture in one side of the locket and his in the other. I can



never forget her pretty surprise, and her long puzzling to find the secret of opening it, the day I gave it to her." Mrs. Anderson was crying now, unrestrainedly.

"You are her daughter, dear, there is not a doubt of it. You have her face, her ways, the very tones of her voice. And poor little Mary died among those savage Indians, and Joseph is dead, I know, or he would have followed her and rescued her."

Francesca was at the door with a message for her mistress, and, unnoticed by the three excited women, had drawn cautiously near as this narrative proceeded. Peering over Nawona's shoulder she now saw the picture in her hand. She pointed her wrinkled brown forefinger at the face of the smiling youth with the curling brown hair.

"Señorita," she cried, "it is El Estranjero."

Alice snatched the picture from Nawona's hand and stared at it. There was the same high white forehead, the same clear gray eyes, the same smiling and tender mouth, the same expression. True, it was many years younger, but this resemblance had perplexed her at the first glance, and now that the old Indian woman had spoken there was not a doubt.

"It is, it is!" she cried. "Oh, Nawona, you have found a father and El Estranjero has at last found a name.

"Tell us, Mrs. Anderson, all you know about these two. Tell us at once. Francesca," she said to the old woman, "tell father to entertain the gentlemen till we come."

"I have little to tell you," Mrs. Anderson said. "Joseph and Mary were schoolmates and grew up together upon adjoining plantations. He chose the army as a profession. They were married, and then came the Civil War with all its confusions. Loyal to the Federal government, Joseph went to the front. Mary's home was broken up; her father and brothers fought and died, two for the North and the father and one brother for the South. When his command was transferred to the Army of the West, she followed her young husband, and then, as my own husband was with the Army of the Potomac, I lost sight of the young people.

"But who is this man," she said, "that the miniature of Joseph Gratton so strangely resembles?"

Alice related the strange account of the appearance of El Estranjero in the pueblo, his total loss of memory, as the result of his injuries, privations, and long illness, and the tale related by Francesca of her vision, seen that summer night when El Estranjero first became conscious.

The story of the vision removed once and for all Nawona's suspicions of Francesca, and she, in turn, told what had occurred on the day Mrs. Anderson's letter, telling of her expected visit, was received.

Alice was very thoughtful while this narrative was being supplied, and when Nawona had finished said:

"Let us agree between us to keep this matter quiet for the present. Mrs. Anderson, have you any means of finding out the record of Joseph Gratton? I mean

that part of his story that would supply what we do not know, how he came to be with his wife and child in the mountains of Southern California?"

"My brother, General ————, has access to the records of the War Department. They will probably unravel that part of the mystery."

"We must have documents that will convince El Estranjero," said Alice. "His mind is a blank as to his whole past, and we must be able to furnish all the proofs of his identity. So, I think until we can do this, we had better keep silent."

"I must tell Philip," objected Nawona.

"Oh, yes, little one, we know that you could keep no secret from Philip," smiled Mrs. Anderson, "but I will not tell my husband until I am fortified with every possible proof."

With this mutual understanding the three ladies went out to meet their guests. The evening passed gayly; the dance was kept up till the morning star shone in the sky, and when the revelry was over and the cavalry had ridden away at dawn, Alice, pale, weary and heartsore, threw herself upon her bed to think over the events of the past few hours.

What effect would the revelation of Estranjero's past have upon his life and upon her own? When he gazed at the sweet face in the miniature, would his memory pick up the dropped threads, and all the old and forgotten emotions be aroused? Yes, there was no doubt that the miniature and the proofs that would be brought forth would perfectly reunite the broken

chain of his life, and then with kindred and family restored to him he would go to take his rightful place in the world.

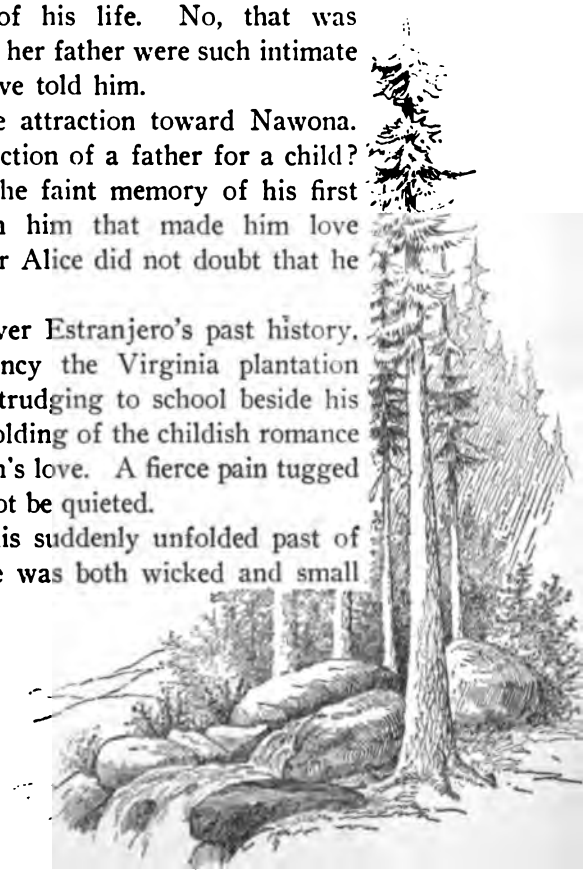
He had never again spoken of that night in the patio. Perhaps even then some memory of his past had stirred within him. Perhaps the emotion that then thrilled him had reknit the old thread and he had remembered his first love, and it was the face in the miniature which had come to him after that night and so he had said no more.

Surely the remembrance could have been only faint and fugitive, surely he could not have recalled a single incident to anchor it and give it the proper place in the sequence of his life. No, that was quite impossible. He and her father were such intimate friends that he would have told him.

There was his strange attraction toward Nawona. Was this the natural affection of a father for a child? No, it must have been the faint memory of his first love that stirred within him that made him love Nawona at first sight, for Alice did not doubt that he had loved Nawona.

Then Alice thought over Estranjero's past history. She pictured in her fancy the Virginia plantation where he was born, his trudging to school beside his child sweetheart, the unfolding of the childish romance into the fervor of the man's love. A fierce pain tugged at her heart and would not be quieted.

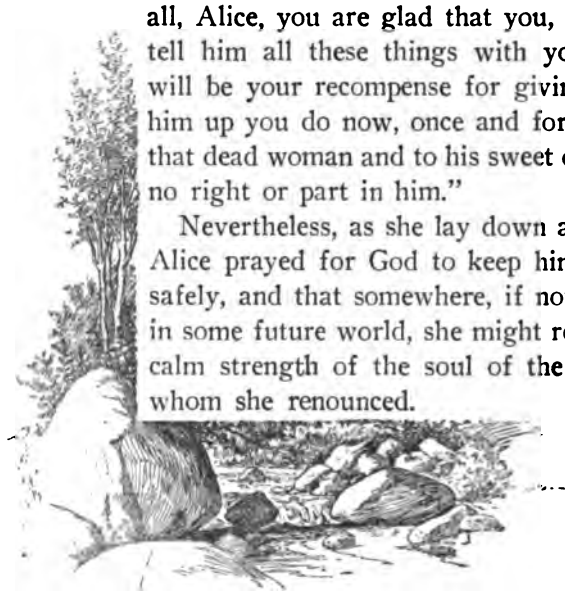
She was jealous of this suddenly unfolded past of the man she loved. She was both wicked and small



natured, she told herself many times, or she would rejoice that he had found a daughter and was no longer a nameless dependent upon strangers. But she did not rejoice; she wished that it were not so, that Nawona was still the girl of unknown parentage whom Philip was to marry, that Estranjero was still the nameless man, who might some day love her.

These thoughts surged through her, then she sat up, and flung back her hair from her tear-wet face.

"Alice Holcomb," she said sternly, "you are worse that I thought you. You absolutely put away all these unworthy thoughts. They are not true; if they were it would be yourself that you love, not Estranjero. You are glad that now he can hold up his head among the best. You are glad that his life will be enriched with all the memories of his youth. Above all, Alice, you are glad that you, and you alone, shall tell him all these things with your own lips. This will be your recompense for giving him up, for give him up you do now, once and for all. He belongs to that dead woman and to his sweet daughter. You have no right or part in him."



Nevertheless, as she lay down again and fell asleep, Alice prayed for God to keep him, to send him back safely, and that somewhere, if not in this world, then in some future world, she might rest her soul upon the calm strength of the soul of the man she loved and whom she renounced.

CHAPTER XL

BOOTS AND SADDLES

Juan, riding limp and weary in the woods at the edge of the desert, with his face turned toward the pueblo, sat up alert and excited as his horse, pricking up its ears, whinnied and was answered near at hand by another horse, and then another, and another. Listening, his quick ear heard the soft thud of many tramping hoofs, and then a low spoken word of command. It was cavalry, no doubt. They had heard his horse, and were ready if it should be an Apache pony approaching.

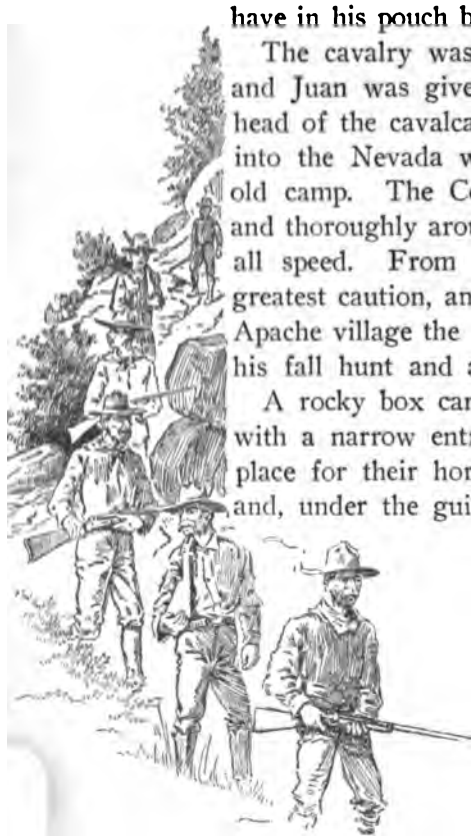
Juan made haste to ride up into the open upon a ridge, where he could be plainly seen, and sat there waiting. A trooper ventured out and rode straight toward him, his carbine ready for instant use if this should prove a ruse and the Indian, who looked like a friendly Mission Indian, but disguise an ambush of the Apaches.

When the trooper was near enough Juan spoke in English. "I am Señor Holcomb's man, Juan," he said, "on my way to Elevado to ask help for El Estranjero and Mr. Gardiner, who are prisoners among the Apaches."

"Wait here," commanded the soldier, "and I will carry your message to Colonel Anderson."

In a few minutes the Colonel came trotting up to

the place where Juan sat. From Mr. Holcomb he had heard the story of the prospectors and knew the personnel of the party, and that Juan was with them. He listened to the account of their capture with great solicitude, and Juan at once offered to substantiate his story by leading the troop to the place where they had made their winter hovel and by guiding them to the Indian village where Gardiner and Estranjero were held. He thanked the Virgin for his good fortune in meeting the troops, as his fears for Gardiner and Estranjero had urged him to travel night and day and he was afraid that neither he nor his horse could bear the fatigues of the long journey. He had not taken time to hunt for game, and had subsisted as best he might on the little jerky he happened to have in his pouch before the Indians looted the camp.



The cavalry was plentifully supplied with rations, and Juan was given a fresh mount. Riding at the head of the cavalcade, he led them across the desert, into the Nevada woods and so to the ruins of the old camp. The Colonel, now thoroughly convinced and thoroughly aroused, pushed his men forward with all speed. From this point they moved with the greatest caution, and reached the neighborhood of the Apache village the very night Bull-face returned from his fall hunt and assembled his warriors in council.

A rocky box canyon with overhanging ledges and with a narrow entrance proved to be a good hiding place for their horses, so the troop was dismounted and, under the guidance of Juan, crept undiscovered

"They moved with the greatest caution."—Page 258

"Yes, Gardiner, it seems that it has," without a tremor answered El Estranjero.

"Well, there's always something to be thankful for," rejoined the philosopher, "and I'm thankful that we're to be burned with dry wood. Good-bye, friend, it won't be a long job."

"Good-bye, Gardiner; we've had many pleasant days together. You're a man as well as a philosopher," was Estranjero's answer.

They had now arrived at the stake. A painted brave had sprung forward with the thongs, ready to bind them to the upright posts; two others stood, one at each pile of wood, with a flaming brand in hand ready to light the pyres; but at that instant a shot from the cover of the brush struck one of the torch-bearers in the breast and he fell.

The momentary consternation was quite sufficient for the five scouts posted in the nearer covert to rush forward, hastily scatter the faggots with their boots, cut the thongs of the prisoners, and with leveled carbines, back into the brush with El Estranjero and Gardiner, protecting them as they retreated.

The uniform of Uncle Sam's soldiers was a most unpleasant sight for the Apache braves at that moment. Their experiences with Uncle Sam's boys in the past had so impressed them with the latter's prowess that they had no desire again to come into contact with them. They had so often succeeded in making the Government believe that it was some other "bad boy" had done naughty work, in case of border

depredations, that they thought that they might easily do so this time, but here they were, many miles from their proper place if captured, and taken red-handed in an outrage upon white men.

They were quick to see the logic of the situation, and felt sure that there must be a considerable force surrounding them, else the attack would not have been so bold. Whether they should fight or run was the question that must have occurred to each, and it seemed that the unanimous opinion was that it would be best to scatter quietly and trust to luck and the darkness of the night to evade pursuit.

A few shots from the troopers denoted that a few of the hostiles had exposed themselves, but by leaving behind them everything in the village, and taking at once to the brush, they made their get-away, and though the troopers remained upon the watch in their ambush till daylight, there were few results of the surprise, beyond the re-capture of the prisoners.

Feeling sure that the hostiles would now make every attempt to reach their reservation or rallying a large band, become openly defiant, Colonel Anderson sent Juan and five troopers back to Elevado with Gardiner and Estranjero, and striking the Old Santa Fe trail, he rode with the rest of the company to the nearest fort in the Apache country, that he might make report upon his movements and render assistance if such were needed.

CHAPTER XLI

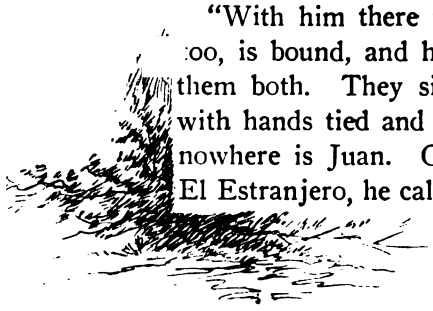
A PSYCHIC PHENOMENON

Old Francesca was ill. Rheumatism had her in its grasp, and Vera was queening it over her kitchen. This in itself would have been grief enough, but to be laid by the heels now when she longed to be out and in the wilderness seeking Juan and Estranjero!

Alice was sitting by her side. It was early in the morning and the old woman dozed, so Alice waited with a tray and some delicacy to tempt her appetite, until the Indian woman awoke. When she opened her eyes, Alice was surprised to notice how wild they looked.

"Señorita," cried the old woman, "he calls, Estranjero calls, and I cannot go. The night before and again last night he called to me. His hands are bound, his clothes in rags, and he limps as he walks. He is driven along over rocks and streams by Apaches and they spit upon him and revile him, but in reply he says nothing.

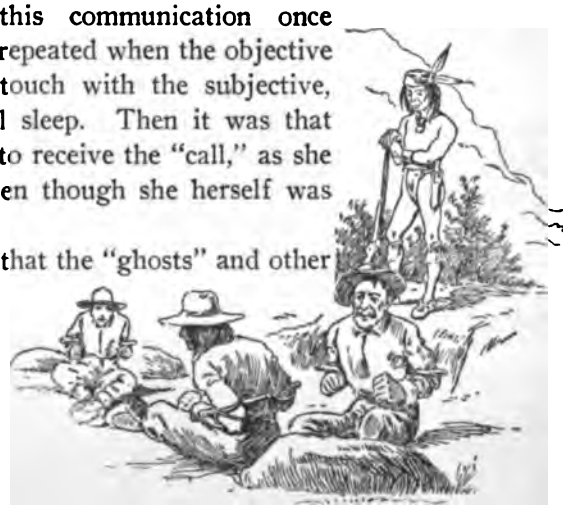
"With him there is another, but not Juan, and he, too, is bound, and he, too, limps. Last night I saw them both. They sit in a village and they are still with hands tied and now their feet, too, are tied, but nowhere is Juan. Oh, Señorita, send some one to El Estranjero, he calls, and he calls!"



Alice heard the old woman with a shudder. "I will send some one, Francesca," she said, "now eat."

"If they are not here when they said they would return," Alice thought, "I will urge father to go and find them." She began to feel that there was something out of the natural in this power of Francesca to communicate with Estranjero.

Even at that time many devoted scientists had investigated various mental phenomena, but the knowledge of psychic occulta was not so widespread then as it is now. Had it been, Alice could have understood that Francesca's long vigil at Estranjero's bedside had brought her mind into rapport with that of the patient. Estranjero was then in what is now called the subjective state. The subjective mentality, being in the ascendant and knowing all things, past, present or future, could convey by mental transference or telepathy what was in the subjective mind, and thus reveal the history of his past. Alice would have known that the subjective consciousness, through the total suspension of Estranjero's memory, was on the alert to communicate with the first person able to receive its message, and this communication once established was likely to be repeated when the objective consciousness was out of touch with the subjective, as when he was in normal sleep. Then it was that Francesca was always able to receive the "call," as she called it, of Estranjero, even though she herself was wide awake.



Alice would have known that the "ghosts" and other

so-called occult phenomena that are constantly being told of, are due to this power of the subjective mind to convey what we now call telepathic messages; but knowing none of these things, she could only ponder the strange experiences of the old woman with secret uneasiness and wait with a woman's patience for what time would bring forth.

CHAPTER XLII

A LETTER

As Colonel Anderson had given the men he sent with Estranjero, Gardiner, and Juan orders to proceed slowly and at the convenience of the two rescued men, it was decided by them to camp in their old cliff dwelling for a few days, till they could recruit their strength, impaired by the scant living in the Indian village.

Juan and the soldiers hunted in the woods, while Gardiner, as soon as he was able to do so, resumed his search for the prospect hole that he had come to find. At last he found it and, making his monuments and locating properly his mine, was then ready to return and wait for another season before working it. As the winter was now almost upon them, and the snows would make the mountains impassable, it was decided to return at once.

As is sometimes the case in Southern California the early rains were all warm and no snow fell in the mountains until long after this journey was over The weather remaining bright and warm, the home trail was followed in a leisurely manner, and it was not until a week before Christmas that Estranjero saw the blue smoke from the chimney of the Holcomb house and the fair valley outspread in all its beauty.

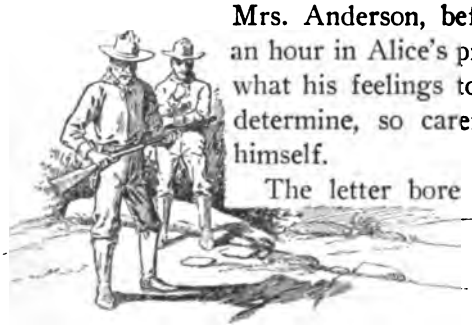
They arrived late at night, and Alice did not kno

they had come, until happening to glance from her window she saw Juan smoking his cigarette at the farthest corner of the patio, and Estranjero, thinner, more bronzed than she had ever seen him, but otherwise unchanged, talking with her father as they sat on the bench under the rosebush.

Her hands trembled as she finished coiling her hair and fastened her linen collar, but she soon regained her composure and met him at breakfast as though he had been gone but a day.

Mrs. Anderson watched Estranjero curiously that morning, as he told of his capture and rescue, and gave an account of all that had happened in the weeks since he went away. More than once she addressed some question to him that directed his full attention to her, thinking that he might recognize her; for the instant she saw him, all doubt she might have had of his identity vanished, and every trick of voice and gesture reminded her of the lad she had long before known so well.

That day Mrs. Anderson went into Alice's room with a voluminous letter in her hands. Alice had not spoken half a dozen words to Estranjero, but some subtle sympathy between the two women had apprised Mrs. Anderson, before she had seen Estranjero half an hour in Alice's presence, that she loved him, though what his feelings toward the girl were, she could not determine, so careful was the guard he kept upon himself.



The letter bore a Washington postmark, and we

will not quote its language; but Alice, reading it, found that the General, Mrs. Anderson's brother, had made a most thorough search of the records, his own keen interest in the Gratton family causing him to overlook no detail. His influence with the War Department was such that every assistance was granted and every latitude given.

He found that Joseph Gratton had been a student at West Point, had become at an early age a Colonel in the regular army, and was loyal to the Union when Virginia seceded. He had distinguished himself at the battle of Bull Run, where he had been wounded in the right wrist. For his bravery in this battle he was promoted.

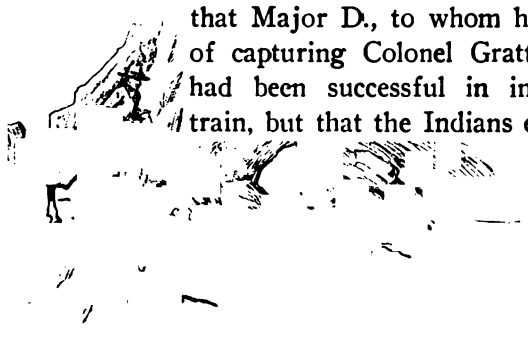
The Pay Master's Department showed the name of Colonel Gratton on the pay roll for two years after the former record ended, with accumulation of salary for nearly that time; then all search of the record was unavailing, until it was discovered from a Secret Service record that Gratton had later been ordered to California upon the request of General H., Commandant of the Pacific Coast, for an officer of experience who could speak Spanish to be sent out to the southern end of the state where the emissaries of the Confederate government were using every effort to induce the people to secede from the Union. It was his opinion that a man of energy and ability should organize leagues for the propagation of loyal sentiment and to prevent, if possible, this secession.

Gratton was the man chosen for this post, and a

record on file gave a request from him that his wife and child might be allowed to accompany him, as he might be gone months or years. This request had been granted, and a requisition made on the Treasury for the expenses. Following the matter further, the General found that Gratton had reported his safe arrival at St. Louis and that on the next day he would join an immigrant train going West. As his mission was a secret one, it was presumed that he had been ordered to do this.

Another letter filed in the Department from the Commandant of the Division of the Pacific Coast, stated that he had received a report which it had been impossible to verify, that the immigrant train in which Gratton traveled had been attacked by Indians and that the attacking party had been led by a Confederate officer. As every individual in the train had perished, and as Gratton was never again heard of, the Commandant thought he and his wife and child must have been killed.

The indefatigable General then consulted the war records of the Confederacy and finally found an order directing General B. to send some one to intercept Colonel Gratton, whose movements had been reported and whose mission was suspected, and to prevent his reaching California at all hazards. Later on he found that Major D., to whom had been assigned the duty of capturing Colonel Gratton, had reported that he had been successful in intercepting the immigrant train, but that the Indians employed by General B. to



aid him, became unmanageable in the attack and had, unfortunately, murdered everybody in the train with the exception of Colonel Gratton's wife and daughter, and that they had been given over to the Indians, who demanded them, and whose demands the Major had no means of resisting.

When Alice had given this letter a careful reading, Mrs. Anderson said, "He is Joseph Gratton. I knew him at once. Upon his right wrist is the scar made by the bullet at Bull Run. I noticed it this morning as we sat at breakfast. What shall we do, Alice? The Gratton estate is a rich property. It is in need of a master, and Joseph is the last of his family."

"Wait, dear friend, let me tell Estranjero all the things in this letter and try to awaken his memory of the past. I have known him so many years, I believe I can better approach this subject with him than any other could."

"Then you shall do it, Alice, even before we tell Nawona that the proofs have come. Here, take the letter and let me know as soon as you can how he has received it."

CHAPTER XLIII

THE REVELATION

Alice found no opportunity to speak privately with Estranjero until late in the afternoon. Then, as he took the path toward the cypress hedge, she threw a fleecy wrap about her shoulders and making a short cut from the corner of the patio, entered the path a few steps ahead of him, apparently unconscious of his presence.

She heard his step falter an instant, then he came forward raising his sombrero and bowing to her.

"Are you contemplating a walk, Miss Alice?"

"It is near sunset," she replied, with a little inward qualm at her own cowardice, "and it is pleasant at this hour."

"It is always pleasant here," said Estranjero, as they walked along, "and I shall often think of this orchard when I am gone."

"Gone!" almost gasped Alice.

"Yes, Miss Alice, at last I have determined to leave Elevado."

"Are you tired of the place?" she inquired.

"Who could tire of this place?" he replied, smiling. "Its beauty is as perfect when the rains are falling as in the driest of the summer weather, and in the dry weather it is as perfect as when it is green in the spring. No, I should never tire of Elevado."

"Then why are you leaving?" queried Alice. They had by this time come to the gate in the hedge, but Alice motioned Estranjero to a little summerhouse, thatched with palm leaves, that stood at the angle of the hedge. Here she often sat in the bright afternoons with her books and sewing. Now sinking into one of the low chairs she motioned El Estranjero to another.

He took off his sombrero and laid it upon a table, and now Alice noticed the haggardness of his usually placid face. The control he habitually exercised seemed to be broken by some strong emotion, and his eyes were troubled as he looked at the downcast face of the girl. She was silent a moment, and then glanced at him. "Estranjero, you cannot think of leaving us after all these years."

"Yes, Alice. I have been too long a beneficiary of your father's hospitality."

"How has he made you feel that, Señor?"

"He has never made me feel it. He has been like a tender elder brother to me, and I shall never forget his kindness; but I have lately realized that to stay here indefinitely is hardly the manly thing for me to do. I am a man without a name or place in the world. I must achieve both by my own exertions, and be dependent upon myself."

"I understand you, Señor, and cannot blame you for the feeling, but can nothing change your decision?"

"I can think of nothing. I have been seeking this opportunity, hoping to see you alone that I might tell

you first, and also that I might ask your pardon."

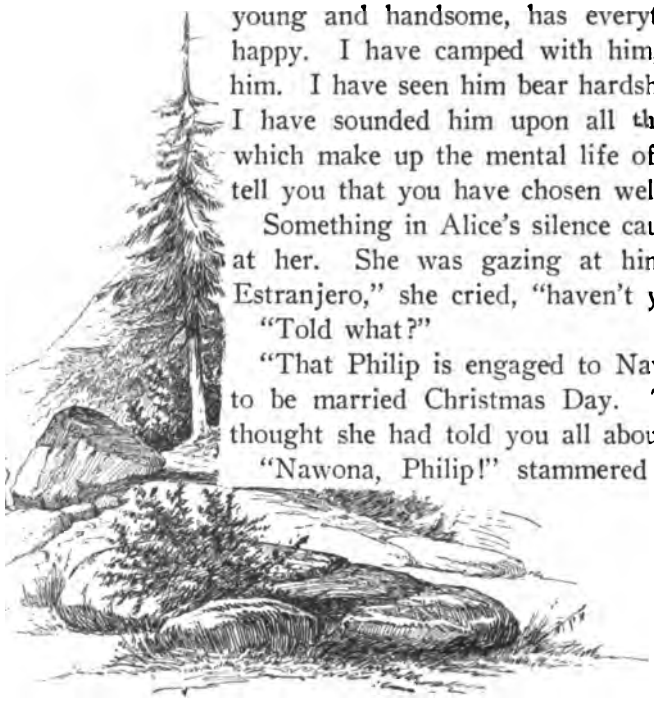
"For what?"

"For a great presumption some weeks ago, in the patio, when the mocking birds were singing," he replied hesitatingly, a deep color suffusing his face, the veins of his throat throbbing perceptibly.

Alice said nothing, and he continued, "I knew that you were much attached to Philip, but I knew, too, that you were own cousins and I had not thought it possible that you loved him in that way."

Alice was staring now in the utmost astonishment, but El Estranjero was gazing at the floor and did not notice her look.

"I knew it soon after, however, for I saw you together—your caresses—by accident,—" all this very hesitatingly and gently. "I could not blame you. He is young and handsome, has everything to make you happy. I have camped with him, and tramped with him. I have seen him bear hardship and face danger. I have sounded him upon all the intimate themes which make up the mental life of men, and, Alice, I tell you that you have chosen well."



Something in Alice's silence caused him to look up at her. She was gazing at him merrily. "Why, Estranjero," she cried, "haven't you been told yet?"

"Told what?"

"That Philip is engaged to Nawona, that they are to be married Christmas Day. The sly minx! I thought she had told you all about it."

"Nawona, Philip!" stammered Estranjero.

"Yes, Nawona—Philip," Alice laughed, imitating his accents, "and it's as plain as daylight that they have adored each other from the very first."

"I have not had time to talk with Nawona since I came back, and to tell the truth my mind was so possessed by the ideas I have just revealed to you, that I am afraid I should not have understood without being told in so many words."

"No, Estranjero, Philip and I have always been like brother and sister, and the idea of any other relation never entered my head or his; besides he is my cousin, and I don't believe in such marriages."

Estranjero arose and took a couple of turns up and down the floor, pondering this turn of affairs, giving vent to some ejaculation of surprise under his breath. Then he planted himself firmly in his chair, and looked at Alice.

"Alice," he said, "you may guess what this information means to me, and what new courage it gives me to do what I must now do."

Alice was mute. He bent forward, took one of the hands that lay in her lap and raised it respectfully to his lips.

"Alice, that night in the patio, I told you that my soul was calling for you. It has called you every hour since. In the dark nights in the wilderness, under the stars upon the mountains, through the dust and sunlight of the long trails, my soul has called you and will call until yours answers."

She opened her lips to speak, but he went on.

"When I have a name and place and a home to offer you, Alice, I shall come back to you, and if you are heart free and will listen to me, I will tell you then how dearly I love you. Now I know I have no right. Yet there is one question I ask you now, Alice, would you then look with favor upon a man without a name or a past?"

A great fear seemed to seize El Estranjero then, for Alice looked him calmly in the eyes and said,

"Estranjero, the man I love has both a name and a past. If you will be patient with me, I will tell you about him."

This seemed deliberate cruelty in Alice, but while he had been speaking, she had determined to give his mind a preliminary shock, so that the great shock she was now to deal him would not absolutely stun him. In the conflict of his present emotions, there would no doubt be a link with those of the past.

Alice saw clearly what her own position might be should he instantly recall his youth and early love. A direct answer to his appeal, she felt, would be unjust to him and would place her in a false position when his early love was remembered.

He was the soul of honor. He should not be bound to her by a single tie other than that of love, and he must know his own history, his own past and his relation to Nawona before she would answer him.

Then, she thought as he was speaking, would not the father-affection sweep over him and dominate his feelings when he knew the fair Nawona was flesh

of his flesh? She had often read of the rush of feeling of the mother for her new-born child, a feeling that overmasters every other emotion, and the power of which often submerges even wifely love.

"I will be fair and frank with him," she said, and so she looked him in the eye and repeated, "I love a man who has name and place in the world, and I wish you to listen while I tell you about him."

Alice moved her chair where she could study every emotion that showed upon Estranjero's face. He had laid her hand down reverently in her lap, but now to his great surprise she took his right hand in her firm, cool clasp, turned it over and pointed to a long scar upon his wrist.

"Estranjero, where did you get the wound that made that mark?" she said.

He looked at it curiously. "I have often wondered, but so far as I know it has always been there. It is part of the mystery of my life that I cannot penetrate."

"Well, keep your mind on that scar," Alice said, "and listen to my story."

This was a curious beginning, he thought. Then he flushed. Perhaps she thought he was unable to concentrate sufficiently, on account of his disappointment, to listen to her, and had used this little ruse to steady him. Well, he suffered, but he was a man and he would bear it. He said nothing, and Alice began.

"In a fair Virginia valley there is a broad plantation. In that plantation about the center of the green fields, there is a large white house with columns rising nearly

to the roof, and these columns support a wide gallery running clear across the front and around three sides. There are roses and lilacs and honeysuckle in the old fashioned front garden, and in the rear is a vegetable garden where a white-headed old negro—his name is Cuffy—hoes and waters the young vegetables, and he is always humming some kind of a tune, usually a hymn."

Estranjero now was watching the speaker with strained attention, and Alice wondered if this picture so faithfully described to her by Mrs. Anderson and so often rehearsed in her own mind awoke any dormant memory.

"On the gallery," she went on after a moment's pause, "in the long afternoons of the summer, a woman sits with a little boy. The woman has blue eyes and golden hair; the boy has brown curls and gray eyes, and there is one toy he loves above all others, a rocking horse with a real mane and tail. He calls it Tom, for he has a real pony in the barn he calls Tom. Sometimes he romps there with a huge yellow and white St. Bernard dog that he calls Provo, and sometimes he hitches a little red wagon to the great creature and is drawn swiftly over the graveled driveway, shouting and laughing."

Estranjero's forehead had begun to wrinkle in a puzzled frown. "Why was Alice telling him this long story? It was unlike her to do so much talking to so little purpose. However, he was here beside her, he could smell the faint perfume from her bright hair,

and her soft breath almost fanned his cheek; let her talk as long as she would, he would listen gladly, for there was no other music like her voice."

"Are you listening?" inquired Alice, suspecting him of wandering in his attention to her story. He pulled himself together with a smile.

"I am listening with the most absorbed attention. You are a good story teller, Alice, I did not know you had such a gift."

"Now, this is an unusual story, and all I am telling you is preliminary," Alice replied, "but did you ever see such a house, and such a woman and child as I am describing?"

"Never," said Estranjero with decision.

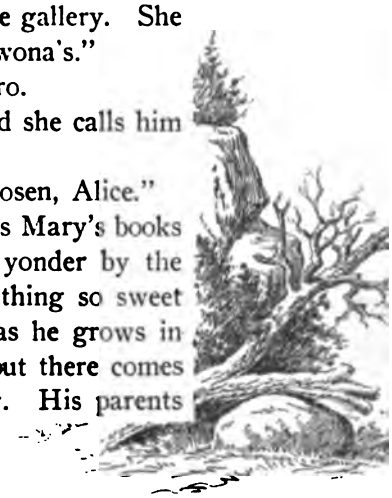
Alice pondered a minute and then continued: "Sometimes a little girl, who lives in that house that can just be seen from the northeastern corner of the gallery, comes over to visit this little boy, and plays with him on the lawn and romps with him on the gallery. She has blue eyes and brown hair, like Nawona's."

"Like Nawona's," repeated Estranjero.

"Yes, and the boy calls her Mary and she calls him Joseph."

"Quite scriptural names you have chosen, Alice."

"Well, the boy grows older, he carries Mary's books to the schoolhouse upon the side hill yonder by the river. He thinks there was never anything so sweet in the world as her rosy cheeks, and as he grows in stature this feeling grows upon him; but there comes a time when he must part from Mary. His parents



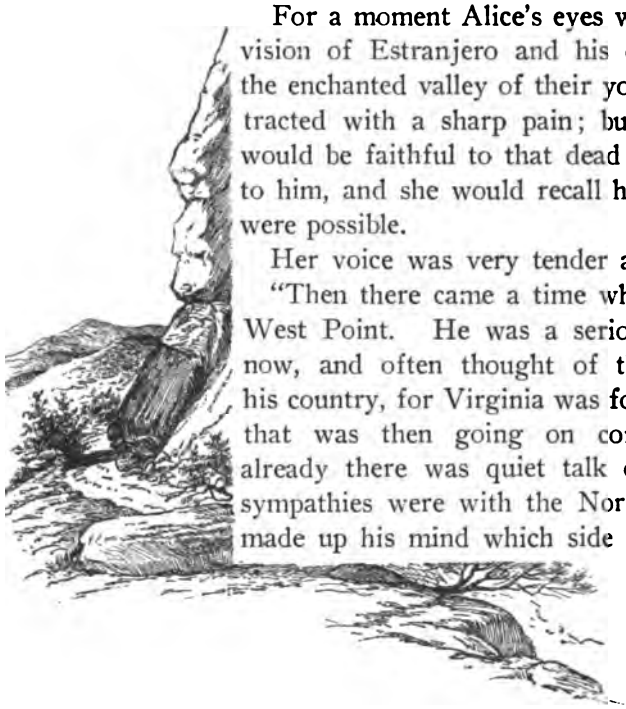
send him to a preparatory school and he does not see his home nor Mary for many a day."

Estranjero was still impassive.

"I suppose, now, you will tell me that Mary falls in love with some other boy and poor Joseph is thrown over."

"Oh, no, indeed," said Alice, "he thinks of Mary continually, for his nature is deep and steadfast and mature even in early youth. So he thinks of Mary always in those days of school life; in the vacations he spends nearly all his time with her roaming the green fields, for she has grown more lovely as she has grown in stature, and she is as true and sweet as she is beautiful."

For a moment Alice's eyes were misty. She had a vision of Estranjero and his early love strolling in the enchanted valley of their youth and her heart contracted with a sharp pain; but she told herself she would be faithful to that dead wife who was so true to him, and she would recall her to his memory if it were possible.



Her voice was very tender as she continued:

"Then there came a time when Joseph was sent to West Point. He was a serious-minded young man now, and often thought of the danger threatening his country, for Virginia was foremost in the agitation that was then going on concerning slavery, and already there was quiet talk of secession. Joseph's sympathies were with the North and he had already made up his mind which side he would take if there

was to be war when he came home at twenty and was married to his dear Mary."

Alice now continued rapidly: "The war was finally declared and Joseph went to the front as a Colonel of volunteers, and in one of the early battles, the first battle of Bull Run, he was struck by a bullet in the right wrist, and it made a scar just like that," and Alice laid her soft fingers upon the scar and left her hand there as she seached Estranjero's impassive face.

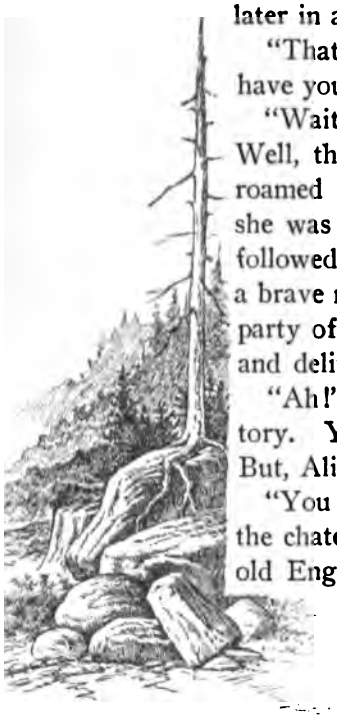
At first he wondered if that lingering touch could have been an accident. It must have been, but there was something indescribably sweet in the voice and manner of the woman before him, some indefinable solicitude for him that began to penetrate his consciousness and give him a warm glow that suffused his eyes with light.

"After a while Joseph was sent West upon a secret mission. His faithful Mary accompanied him, and now there was a little girl, a dainty creature about five years old, for Joseph and Mary had been married six years now, and the little child must have been a great delight and comfort to them on the long journey as they crossed the wide plains in the wagon of an immigrant train.

"I know nothing whatever about that journey, so will skip that part and come to a night when they were encamped upon the mountain, an awful night of rain and thunder and lightning, and while all were asleep, there were shrieks and cries, and the Indians broke out of the woods and before the men could find their guns,

the savages had dragged the women and children from their beds, had struck down their natural defenders and murdered them. There was a Conferedate officer with them. He had learned Joseph's mission and had been detailed to frustrate it, but the Indians he was commanding had broken all restraint, and he was powerless to prevent the slaughter.

"Joseph was struck down, and then Mary, wild with grief, was carried into captivity—with her little girl. So greatly had the horror of seeing her husband killed at her feet and the murder of the helpless women and children preyed upon her mind, that from that night she was hopelessly insane, and she died three years later in a violent fit of mania."



"That is a sad story," said El Estranjero. "Why have you told it to me, Alice?"

"Wait, it is not finished. There was a little girl. Well, this child was adopted by an Indian chief and roamed the woods and desert with the Indians until she was grown to beautiful young womanhood. She followed a war band to Elevado, and on the retreat, a brave man, Estranjero by name, commanded a small party of scouts that exterminated the band of Indians and delivered the girl."

"Ah!" cried El Estranjero. "This is Nawona's history. You have been telling me of her, poor child. But, Alice, how did you find out all these things?"

"You have seen that?" Alice said, producing from the chatelaine bag at her belt the golden disk with the old English "G" in diamonds.

"Yes, Nawona showed it to me. It is a rarely beautiful trinket."

"This the chief took from her dead mother and wore until his death; and Nawona wore it one night when Mrs. Anderson first came, and at once my friend recognized it as a gift she herself had made to Mary Carter on the day she married Joseph Gratton."

"How very strange," mused El Estranjero, turning the locket in his hand curiously.

"The strangest part is yet to come. Does the locket remind you of anything?"

"Nothing," replied Estranjero in surprise.

"Let me have it," Alice requested.

He laid it in her hand. She pressed the central diamond, the little lever sprang out, she raised it, the locket opened, and Estranjero stared as Alice handed it back to him.

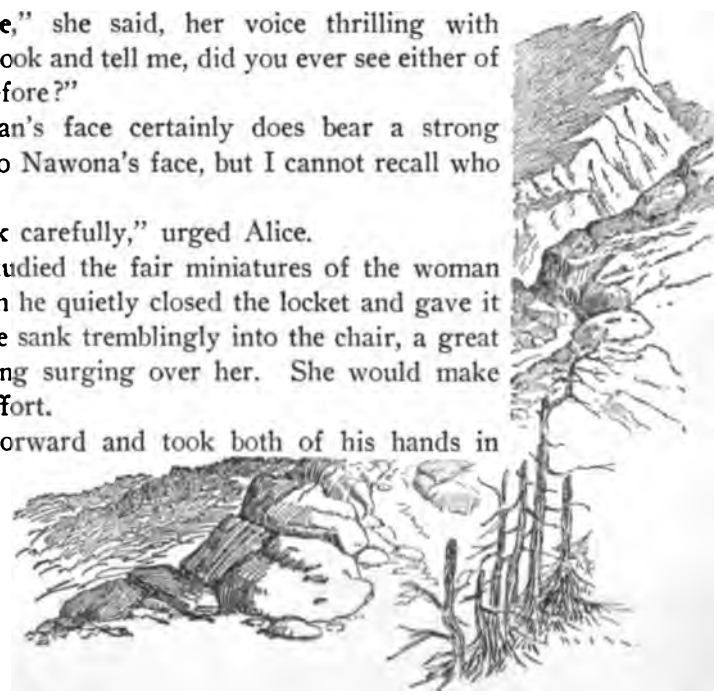
"Look here," she said, her voice thrilling with excitement, "look and tell me, did you ever see either of those faces before?"

"The woman's face certainly does bear a strong resemblance to Nawona's face, but I cannot recall who it is."

"Look, look carefully," urged Alice.

Long he studied the fair miniatures of the woman and man, then he quietly closed the locket and gave it to Alice. She sank tremblingly into the chair, a great wave of feeling surging over her. She would make yet another effort.

She bent forward and took both of his hands in



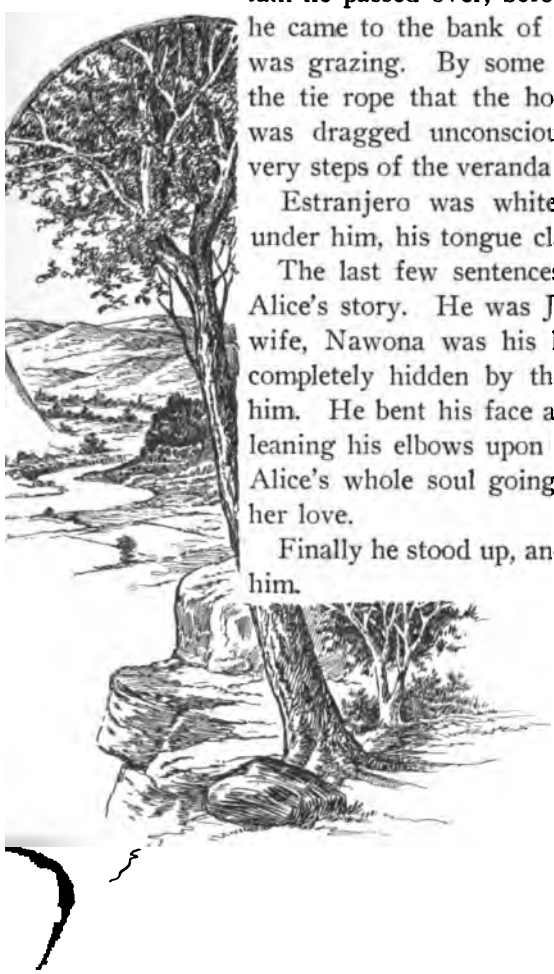
hers. "Estranjero," she said, "I want you to listen now as you never listened before, and think now with all the power of your mind, for my story is not yet done."

Something of her own excitement seemed to pass through him.

"Joseph! I have not yet told you of Joseph!"

"But Joseph was killed by the Indians."

"He was struck down by a bullet, but he was not killed." Alice returned slowly. "How many hours he lay there in the rain I cannot tell you, neither can I tell you of the long weary miles of desert and mountain he passed over, before, fainting and almost dead, he came to the bank of a little stream where a horse was grazing. By some means he tangled himself in the tie rope that the horse was staked with, and he was dragged unconscious and almost dying to the very steps of the veranda there."



Estranjero was white as death, his limbs shook under him, his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth.

The last few sentences had told him the object of Alice's story. He was Joseph Gratton, Mary was his wife, Nawona was his little daughter long lost and completely hidden by the mists that had enshrouded him. He bent his face and covered it with his hands, leaning his elbows upon his knees. Long he sat thus, Alice's whole soul going out to him in the agony of her love.

Finally he stood up, and Alice arose and stood facing him.

"Alice," he cried, "can this be true?"

She opened the locket again and pointed to the miniature of the man.

"Estranjero," she breathed, "that is your own face there, and Mrs. Anderson recognized you the moment she saw you. She knew you from the time you were a tiny child, she knew your whole story up to the time you started for the West, and I have all the proofs here," and she touched the chatelaine bag. "We wrote to Washington and had a search made of the records."

"Alice, I swear to you before my God, that I can recall absolutely nothing of all my life, as you have told it to me. Even now with every effort you have made, and I see now why your story was told in such detail, I cannot remember the smallest thing, the least incident, the faintest glimmering of any life other than that which began when I opened my eyes in that room yonder."

"Estranjero, there can be no doubt that you are Joseph Gratton. Not only are there arrears of salary amounting to many thousand dollars, but the Gratton plantation in Virginia belongs to you. Your father and mother have been dead for years, and you were their only child."

"Alice, Alice," Estranjero murmured, "I am stunned with all this, but the thread of my memory of the past seems broken entirely. I cannot remember—I cannot remember one single thing."

He sank upon the bench that ran around the side of the summerhouse, and again covered his face. This

time Alice, trembling with happiness, sank down beside him. She put her arm about his neck and laid her head against his shoulder.

Swiftly he turned, drew her to his breast, and with his arms about her, looked into her happy eyes.

"Alice, Alice," he whispered.

"Oh, my beloved, I thank God for the affliction that makes you so wholly mine." Alice returned softly. "I had thought perhaps I might tell you this story in such a way that your past would come back to you. I meant to be faithful to the task, but you can't know what I suffered when I thought that the sweep of the tide of memory of your love for Mary would carry all thoughts of me forever out of your heart."

"Oh, Alice!" he replied, "I wish no past that is not connected with you, no present where you are not, no future without you. You have told me that once I had a wife, that I fondly loved and that she is dead. I do not mourn the love that is to me as if it never had been. You have told me that I am the father of Nawona; I have felt drawn to her with a feeling of protection from the first, but there is never a look or glance that can recall to my mind that gentle woman who was her mother. I have no more knowledge of that time and those happenings than though they occurred in another life."

She smiled up at him. "Alice," he whispered, "I have loved you from the morning that I met you there at the gate, and you walked forth like a young goddess to meet the sunrise. I have loved you every hour

since, and I have suffered in that love and tried to renounce it, but the mere sight of you would call it all back in its poignancy."

"And I, too, Estranjero," she replied, "I, too, have suffered. I thought of you constantly, and I have loved you, too, since that morning."

"And now, Alice," he went on, "I am no longer nameless and penniless, there is now no longer need of my going forth to win fortune and place to lay them at your feet. Alice, will you come forever to the heart that hungers for you?"

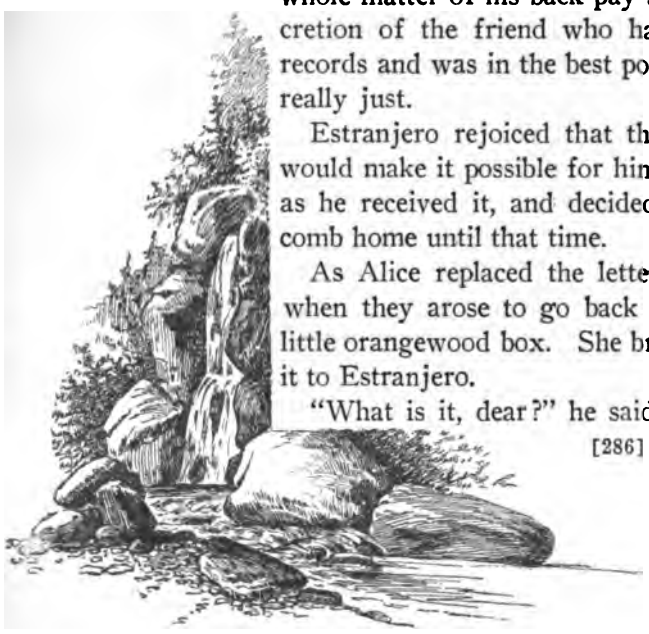
She raised her face to meet his, and upon her lips he placed the reverent seal of their betrothal.

CHAPTER XLIV

A PUEBLO WEDDING

Alice and El Estranjero sat long in the summer-house by the hedge, talking of the past and planning the future. The letter containing the records of the War Department was carefully read again and again, and it was decided that it would be best to forward to Mrs. Anderson's brother an account of Estranjero's life since coming to Elevado, and leave it to the Department to grant such back pay as would cover as nearly as could be estimated the period of his active military service.

Alice could not move Estranjero by any argument to make further demand, but he finally agreed that the whole matter of his back pay should be left to the discretion of the friend who had so far examined the records and was in the best position to know what was really just.



Estranjero rejoiced that this sum of ready money would make it possible for him to marry Alice as soon as he received it, and decided to remain at the Holcomb home until that time.

As Alice replaced the letter in her chatelaine bag, when they arose to go back to the house, she felt a little orangewood box. She brought it out and handed it to Estranjero.

"What is it, dear?" he said.

"Open it," Alice rejoined, laughing.

He did so, and found there the horsehair ring made so long ago.

"And you have kept it all these years?" he said. "Do you remember the words you dictated to me then, Alice? I can say them now with a full heart." And taking her in his arms, beneath the orange tree, he tried to place the ring upon her finger, as he repeated the vow; but the ring was too small even for the slender hand, and so he begged Alice to give it back to him as a memento to be worn some day upon his watch chain.

One thing they had decided in that long conference in the arbor, and that was to keep their affair a secret for the present. The next morning, however, an event transpired that made further secrecy impossible.

They were all standing upon the veranda after breakfast, when a messenger rode up with a package for Mrs. Anderson. She returned to her own room to break the seal, and when she came out again her face was shining with joy.

Alice had told her that she had related Estranjero's past life to him. Mrs. Anderson had told Mr. Holcomb of her brother's investigation into El Estranjero's record while Estranjero and Alice were together in the enchanted summerhouse. Philip already knew the story from Nawona, but as yet neither had been informed that Estranjero had been made acquainted with his past.

All were upon the veranda when Mrs. Anderson

again appeared. She walked straight to Estranjero and placed the package in his hand.

"Joseph," she said, "my brother decided to push your affairs without delay, and he was so successful that here is ten thousand dollars back pay."

Estranjero looked at the packet an instant, then, seeing nothing but Alice's happy look, he dropped it at her feet, and there, before them all, he took her into his arms.

"Oh, my darling, see," he cried, "you know what that money means to us."

Holcomb stared in astonishment, and Alice, covered with blushes, extricated herself from her lover's embrace and threw her arms about her father's neck.

"Yes, my darling, I know," said her father, half gladly and half sadly.

Nawona came up and twined her arm within that of Estranjero.

"Oh, my dear friend and father," she murmured, "I am so happy for you."

He bent and kissed her. "I have no memory of your childhood or of your mother, Nawona. Even though I have kind friends, and in you and Philip loving children, my life would be very lonely were it not for my dear Alice."

So on Christmas day there were to be two weddings in the house in the patio, for Estranjero pleaded hard and would not be denied. They would be married when Nawona and Philip exchanged their vows, and would immediately visit the Virginia plantation to

establish Estranjero's right and sell the property; for neither he nor Alice would consider residing anywhere but in the pueblo where they had first found and loved one another, and Holcomb desired that they should come back and make their home with him in the house that would otherwise be desolate.

Christmas in California is the time when the first of the winter rains have called out of the bosom of the earth its sleeping verdure, and the white roads are hard and dustless, the air like wine, the barley fields either just turned up by the plow or showing their ravishing green, and the chaparral alive with the song of birds. The new-born soul of Nature sings "peace upon earth and good will to men," and upon such a Christmas day the pueblo of Elevado was all astir.

The wedding was to be the occasion of a fiesta that was to bring the neighbors, both Spanish and Gringo, for miles around, into touch with one another. There was to be a barbecue in the afternoon, tilting at the ring, and the other Spanish sports common to a great fiesta, and at night there was to be dancing in the patio, floored and decorated for the occasion, and a never-to-be-forgotten feast upon the veranda.

This was a Christmas day that seemed to be created for such festivities. Early in the morning the company of cavalry that had scouted over the mountains returned dusty and weary to Elevado, but all thought of fatigue was soon forgotten as the officers and men freed themselves from the signs of the campaign and made themselves neat and spruce for the occasion.

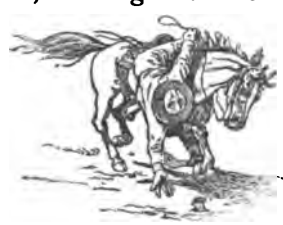
Great was Colonel Anderson's surprise when told the singular history of the man his company had rescued from death at the stake, and all that had befallen him since he last had seen him a lad in his father's house.

There is no need to describe in detail the fiesta of that Christmas day. Again the brush wickiups were built along the riverside. Again the long trenches were dug for the barbecuing of the meat, and the Spanish musicians, dressed in their gorgeous costumes, appeared with their mandolins and guitars, ready to dispense the music of the dance.

All day in wagons, carriages, and on horseback the people of the valley assembled, for there were few who had not heard El Estranjero's history and did not know that the nameless stranger, who had won their regard in the years of his dwelling among them, was now the bearer of an honored name and the owner of a great landed property.

Francesca was resplendent that day in a new scarlet gown and green kerchief, a present from Alice. Her psychic sympathy with Estranjero was known only to the inmates of the Holcomb house, but they looked upon her with peculiar reverence, thinking how humble is the instrument often chosen to reveal the mysteries of life.

Vera, too, was conspicuous in a yellow gown and blue kerchief; but it was Juan, in a brand new suit of store clothes that came all the way from the pueblo of Los Angeles, who, barring the two bridegrooms



themselves, was the happiest man present upon that happy day.

Juan was known to all the Spanish neighbors far and near, and clusters of these would form about him and beg him to relate again the tale of how the two Señors were captured, how he rode over the mountains and met the soldiers, and how they were released. Other story-tellers were there that day, and while the young people strolled, flirted, and danced, their elders heard with deepest interest the adventures by flood and field of the heroes of this tale, and added stories of their own experience, none the less true and interesting.

The barbecue was to be at noon, and the wedding at sunset. Holcomb was everywhere busy among his guests, but the actors in the wedding scene still were secluded from view. Many of the people present had never seen either Nawona or Alice, and were eager to look upon the brides.

With what emotions Alice robed Estranjero's daughter for her bridal can be understood by those who have followed the progress of her own love. The sweetness of Nawona, her youth and her love for Philip, recalled the story of that fair dead woman who was her mother. The locket that held her mother's face was the young bride's only ornament, and, as she stood there in all her fairness, Alice took her in her arms, and with tears in her eyes, blessed her.

"Oh, little rose of the desert," she said, "may you bloom in new beauty in the garden into which Philip transplants you."

"And you, dear Alice, to whom I owe so much, your life must be very happy to return to you the measure of happiness you have given to others. I owe you so much; how can I ever repay you?"

"By loving me," replied Alice, "and taking me into the place of the mother you lost so long ago."

They stood gazing at each other, both in simple white gowns, with orange flowers gathered from their own orchard, twined in their hair, and white roses from their own garden in a great sheaf for each, ready to their hand. Then there was a tap at the door and Philip, in his wedding finery, looked in. He was visibly nervous and spoke hoarsely to Alice.

"I want to ask you something; come here into the hall a moment."

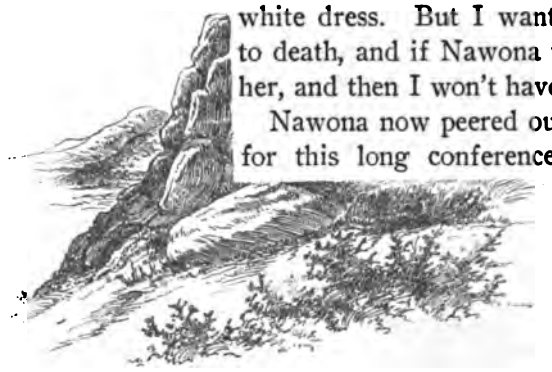
Alice went out, closed the door behind her, a little startled at his manner.

"Alice," he said desperately, "tie this necktie or I will hang myself with it in despair. I have tied it, I know, forty times, and look at it."

Alice laughed merrily.

"Oh, Laddie, it does look awful, but I'll have it right for you in a jiffy. There," and she patted the finished bow, "you're all right."

"Gracious! Chummie, how splendid you are in that white dress. But I want to tell you that I'm scared to death, and if Nawona will come, I'll run away with her, and then I won't have to face the crowd."



Nawona now peered out to see what was the reason for this long conference, and Philip embraced her

rapturously, but Alice stamped her little foot in mock anger.

"Drop her, Philip, drop her I say. If you rumple her, there won't be any wedding." Then taking the laughing girl by the hand, she again led her to her own room.

Scarcely were they settled again, when there was another tap at the door, and this time Nawona went forward. Estranjero stood at the door and beckoned her. She gave a mischievous glance toward Alice, and shut the door behind her, as she stepped into the passage.

"Nawona, dear," he said, "I'd like you to look me over, and see if I seem all right. I never wore such clothes as these before, and I feel some way as if they were not my own."

"You are all right, Estranjero," said Nawona, smiling. She could not learn to call him father.

Just then the Spanish musicians in the patio struck up the wedding march, and Philip, coming swiftly down the passage, clasped Nawona's hand. "It is time," he whispered, "my little bride, it is time."

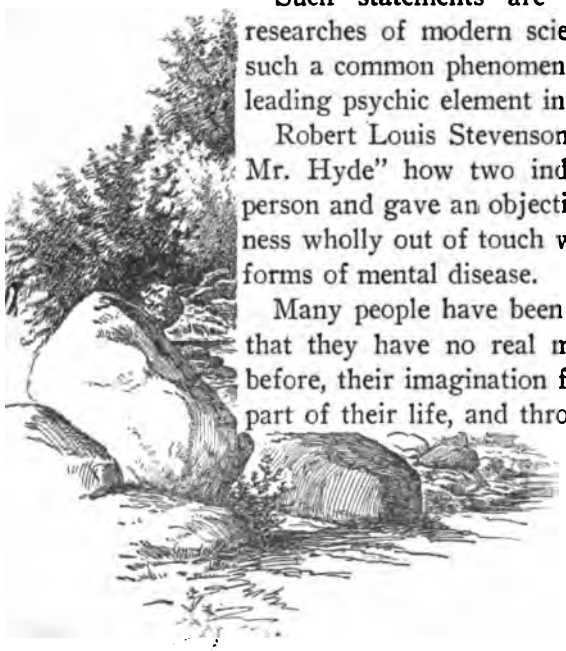
Estranjero softly turned the knob and opened the door. Alice, pale and lovely, stood in the corner of the room. He reached out his hands to her. "Alice," he said, "come."

And so they went and stood before the chancel made of pepper boughs, under a canopy of roses and orange flowers, and just as the last words of the benediction upon their new life were pronounced the mocking bird

in the rosebush began to trill his melody. Alice's gaze sought that of her husband. Both thought of the moonlight night when he had said: "Alice, my soul is calling you." Looking into the depths of her sweet eyes, he now read his answer, and knew that nevermore would he be to her "El Estranjero," the stranger.

L'ENVOI

There are persons who will read this tale and declare that Francesca's perception of those events relating to Estranjero was wholly created by the author and has no foundation in fact. They will say, too, that a loss of memory, whether it be complete or partial, is a self-evident symptom of insanity and must be progressive until the diseased brain becomes the mind-organ of a maniac.



Such statements are fully controverted by the researches of modern science. Double personality is such a common phenomenon that it is recognized as a leading psychic element in crime.

Robert Louis Stevenson showed in "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" how two individuals dwelt in the same person and gave an objective and subjective consciousness wholly out of touch with one another, as in some forms of mental disease.

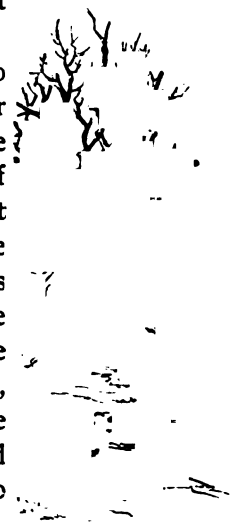
Many people have been so affected by a long fever that they have no real memory of what happened before, their imagination furnishing the details of that part of their life, and through the constantly recalling

by those around them of places and people they once knew, they reconstruct their past, but do not really remember it.

The strange surroundings in which Estranjero found himself of course made such reconstruction impossible.

Again these objectors may urge that such telepathic communications as are described in the experiences of Francesca, are mere figments of the imagination. The science of the mind is still in its infancy and none is bold enough to assert what it may yet disclose.

Some of our most learned and scientific theorists have advanced the idea of mental telepathy, which has been accepted by not a few of our more progressive thinkers. There are many who would state from the existing body of testimony that no further proof is necessary to convince the investigating student that such communication has taken place.



There are many writers on psychic phenomena who claim that such communication has been proven over and over again, and that on this subject there can be no grounds for argument. I myself have known of instances of that character so thoroughly verified that they hardly admitted of a doubt. A friend of mine who was staying with me in New York City years before I came to the Coast had what he believed to be a dream, which he related the next morning at the breakfast table. He said that his brother, a widower, who was living in Australia, appeared to him in the night, and told him that he was sick and that he did not expect to live, and asked his brother to come to

Australia and take his little baby girl and care for her. So deeply impressed was my friend by this dream, that he wrote to friends in Sydney, asking them for a word about his brother's health, and in reply received word of his death. Mr. Nichols—that was my friend's name—afterwards read the letter to me. It was indeed a strong confirmation of the theory of mental telepathy. His brother had died a few days after this so-called dream. On his deathbed he told his attendants and physicians that he had a brother living in New York, who would come for the little one, as he had seen him and begged him to do so. As his brother was still alive when my friend had the dream, it could not have been his disembodied spirit that appeared; and I cannot conceive of any other method of communication than that of mental telepathy.

I have sat before the grate fire with my wife or some friend, dreamily gazing into the fire, when some event suddenly would intrude upon my thoughts, and when I turned to tell my companion found that the same idea had occurred to her or him at precisely the same moment. I suppose most of you have had the same experience in thought waves, though possibly not giving such phenomena much attention, or endeavoring to study out the philosophy of mental telepathy from a scientific standpoint.

I could cite many well authenticated instances of communication from mind to mind, but will call your attention only to one other such incident. An

acquaintance of mine, staying at the Astor in New York, was taken violently ill at the hotel, and during his illness was in a frame of mind closely bordering on insanity. During one day and night of this time he tossed backward and forward from side to side of his bed, calling repeatedly for his wife, who was then staying with friends in New Orleans. So pitiful did his pleadings for his wife become that I determined to wire her the third day if he was no better.

Up to this time I had refrained from doing so, for fear of giving her a shock, not believing his life was in serious danger. The third day he seemed so much better that I decided not to wire, and about noon felt free to go out for a little fresh air. I had gotten as far as the office of the hotel, when I was met by a bellboy with a telegram which proved to be from his wife, and the contents of which so impressed me at the time that I am able to repeat it at this day. It read:

"Is anything the matter with Arthur? Have dreadful dreams. Seem to hear him calling. Am greatly worried. Answer at once.

MRS. ARTHUR SINCLAIR."

Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair are both still living and will at any time verify this statement.

Many writers on psychic occulta believe that subjective mentality may influence thought in receptive minds when the objective being is in a dormant state or past the power of intelligent action. It has ever been demonstrated that one mind can act as a medium for

the transmission of thought to a third through subjective consciousness without the aid of objective faculties. Indeed, this has occurred without the knowledge of the objective consciousness being sufficient for retention in the objective memory. This thought action has been brought about by hypnotic influence, and many experiments, both in private and public, have demonstrated it.

It was perfectly possible for Estranjero to exert this influence unconsciously, and without his own volition, and thousands of cases of such telepathic influence have occurred. There is nothing more natural to suppose than that the telepathic waves, like those of heat, light, and electricity, would always seek the path of least resistance. Thus Francesca's vision becomes a recognized scientific fact and not the mere figment of a romancer's fancy.